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**Sensemaking, Accreditation and Change in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Japanese Private University**

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# **Sensemaking, Accreditation and Change in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Japanese Private University**

Sarah Louisa Birchley

A thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

University of Bath  
Department of Education

October 2013

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Thank you for standing right by my side.

## Abstract

Higher Education (HE) institutions are constantly facing change. Accountability; the metaphor of student as consumer; a focus on management and leadership; and changing global economic conditions all affect the way institutions function. Recently, there has also been an increase in focus on accreditation procedures and organizational change. Although it can be difficult to measure the impact of quality assurance, this research focuses on exploring change and an accreditation procedure conducted by the Japan University Accreditation Association at a Japanese private university.

Higher education institutions are social constructions and largely exist in the mind and as such, during change, some faculty members share values, rules of behaviour, and norms that become stabilized in institutional structures. This is due to the establishment of a common understanding. Conversely, there can be differences between groups in the institution. Thus, research needs to be conducted on how people make sense of change and their institution; the way information is processed and disseminated. By utilizing Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework of four ideal types of meaning, and using Weick's (2005) concept of sensemaking as a lens to examine the change, this research explores how faculty members make sense of change and accreditation and asks how far does this instance correspond to or otherwise illuminate Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework for understanding change? This research contributes to our understanding of change, higher education institutions in Japan and accreditation, acknowledging the importance of effective management and leadership in HE institutions.

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## Glossary of Japanese Terms

(in alphabetical order)

Cultural Code Word	Explanation in English
<i>Amae</i>	Dependency
<i>Amakudari</i>	To descend from heaven
<i>Asakai</i>	Morning meeting
<i>Baka shojiki</i>	To reveal true feelings
<i>Bara-bara</i>	Disorganized
<i>Daigaku</i>	University, place of higher learning
<i>Gimu</i>	Duty
<i>Giri</i>	Duty or obligation
<i>Hone</i>	True feelings
<i>Hyoka</i>	Evaluation
<i>Hyogikai</i>	Meeting of the board that runs the university
<i>Kairyo</i>	Process improvement
<i>Kata</i>	Way of doing things
<i>Kaizen</i>	Continual improvement
<i>Kisei kamwa</i>	Deregulation
<i>Kisei teppai</i>	Abolishment of regulation
<i>Nihonjinron</i>	Theories and discussions about the Japanese
<i>Rijicho</i>	Chairman of the board (university)
<i>Sekinin</i>	Responsibility
<i>Sempai</i>	Senior
<i>Shimagumi</i>	Island country
<i>Taishitsu</i>	Culture of an organization
<i>Tate-mae</i>	Pretense
<i>Usu mo hoben</i>	Lying as a means to an end

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction and Context

This study sets out to develop further the understanding of change as it relates to accreditation in higher education. New world players, revolutions in technology and generational shifts are all but a few of the forces that are affecting the operations of a higher education (HE) institution. Greater global mobility has resulted in the opening up of access to higher education. Political and economic changes on a local and global level effect education budgets, students have different concepts of time and space as they communicate virtually, stakeholders have different ideas of value and engagement than in previous generations and literature shows how these significant movements have resulted in the commodification of HE (Naidoo & Jamison, 2002; Kinmonth, 2005; Amano, 2001, 2008). This has resulted in an increased focus on issues of quality, national and international benchmarking and standards (Yonezawa, 2003, 2008; Eades in Goodman, 2005; Arimoto, 1997; Goodman, 2005). Many of these changes are resulting in public universities behaving like private institutions. Japan already has a dual-structure higher education system (Yonezawa, 2003, 2007). There are both private and public institutions, which are operating in a situation where structures and processes, planning, leadership and implementation are all under new types of pressure.

Studies of institutional theory and change naturally lead to an examination of research on stakeholders involved in the change. In an educational setting, those involved include faculty, various levels of administrators and management, students, parents, local and central governments, related businesses, employers of graduates and consultants. The way in which employees in particular, make sense of such change is an under-researched aspect of change. Utilizing sensemaking as a theoretical framework, this study aims to examine how faculty members make sense of the accreditation procedure and organizational change. It also examines the extent to which they adhere to or fail to

adhere to the dominant knowledge in the organization. Weick's (1995, 2001) framework provides a possible grounding for a deeper examination of what people 'know' about change. Within an organization, individuals build mental models of their environment; they have a 'frame of reference' (Canteril, 1941). These are also called 'cognitive maps' (Weick and Bougen, 1986), 'schemas' (Poole, Gioia & Gray, 1989) or 'belief structures' (Walsh & Ungson, 1995). Other researchers, such as Ericson (2001) have attempted to design frameworks to which we can map types of meaning.

There are two main theories of thought: first, that some groups of people within the organization see things in the same way (Brown, 1978) they share meaning; conversely, there can be differences between the way individuals in an organization see things (Brown, 2000) meaning that at times 'shared meaning is difficult to attain' (Weick, 1995: p.188). Based on these opposing ideas, Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework for explaining types of meaning provides a useful framework for explaining the types of meaning occurring in the institution in this study. These two theoretical perspectives appear to have an explanatory potential for helping us to understand how a higher education institution and its faculty deal with change.

With the help of the theoretical constructs derived from Weick's framework of sensemaking (1971, 2001) and Ericson's (2001) work on how individuals think within organizations, this study provides an analysis of an organizational change process related to the accreditation of a Japanese higher education institution. I attempt to apply these theories in order to better understand the change process and expand knowledge and understanding of the inner workings of Japanese private universities. Additionally, the study sheds light upon broader issues in higher education such as leadership and management, faculty development, student satisfaction, and the meaning and purpose of higher education.

The focus of this research is a case study of a Japanese, four-year, private university located in Japan, conducted between 2008 and 2012. A private university is an institution that is run by a board of investors and directors, therefore indicating that, in many

respects, it is run in much the same way as a private business organization. Wind and Main (1998:p.4) detail the emerging characteristics of an organization in the twenty-first century. I argue that these can be observed in this organization and this will be discussed in further chapters. As we move through the global shift towards the commodification of higher education, many more traditional private business characteristics can be seen in Japanese private higher education institutions. Institutions exist on continuums, their characteristics lie somewhere between finance-oriented to speed-orientated; they can exhibit hierarchal to flat structures; they could be considered anywhere between functional and cross-functional, or rigid and flexible.

Accreditation procedures provide an opportunity for the institution and its employees to look in more depth at the culture of the institution. Both public and private HE institutions are required by law to obtain some kind of accreditation status from one of the designated accreditation associations approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT). The case study institution is accredited by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA). The accreditation occurs every seven years. The entire accreditation procedure lasts between twelve and twenty-four months and this study focuses on the most recent accreditation cycle, which occurred from April 2009-2011.

The university in this study is what could be considered as a typical example of a small-sized, regional, private university – a type that is under increasing pressure in the light of the declining birthrate and rapidly aging population in Japan (Amano, 1999, 2005). A detailed explanation of the institution can be found in the Case Study section however; it is worth noting in this section that in terms of management, the previous three chairmen (*rijicho*) of the university have followed the family hereditary line. All three have had backgrounds outside of education and took up the post of Chairman after retirement from the previous employment. This further illustrates the point that a Japanese private university is run and behaves like a private organization. The next section will explain the approach taken in this research.

## **1.2. Research Approach**

The research covered 2009-2012 with the key timeframe of April 2009-April 2011 being the official accreditation period. Over the course of this procedure, I collected numerous documents relating to the changes, took research diaries and field notes from faculty and internal committee meetings and conducted thirteen semi-structured interviews. The research was rooted in a constructivist-interpretist paradigm, which enabled me to explore the way that respondents made sense of the changes and accreditation procedure and the extent to which they shared a collective understanding. Chapter 3 presents the discussion of the research methods and in particular, the rationale for selecting a Case Study method and semi-structured interviews over an ethnographic approach. The section also details the linguistic complexities of working in English and Japanese along with the cultural issues associated with conducting such research.

## **1.3. Reflexivity**

The professional and personal background that I bring to this research should be clearly stated, as they are central to the rationale for choosing this topic of research. As an educator in the Japanese education system for the past ten years and as a member of faculty at Japanese HE institutions, both public and private during that time, I was keen to develop my understanding of the environment in which I work. At the time of conducting this study, I was a full-time Associate Professor at this institution. My duties included teaching eight ninety-minute classes a week, participating in faculty meetings and six other, monthly departmental and research committee meetings. Obviously, working at the institution under examination put my status as a researcher into question and could potentially bias my findings.

## **1.4. Summary of Key Findings**

This enquiry has revealed that the accreditation procedure at the case-study university

provides an illustration of an interconnected set of issues in higher education and higher education management. The procedure that the faculty experienced was understood and made sense of differently by different people. Observing these differences allowed me to see an array of different problems that need to be addressed. From the literature in this field as explored in Chapter Two, I identified the two key concepts of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and Ericson's conceptual framework (2001). The categories of analysis emerged through both the literature and the data and formed a clear means of presenting what was happening within the institution. The findings have provided a means to answer the initial research questions and have added to my understanding of the two key concepts.

### **1.5. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises a literature review, which will firstly present the literature on change. This will be followed by an examination of the literature on the commodification of HE from a global perspective and literature related to Japanese HE and change. The chapter will then address the theory of sensemaking as defined by Weick's (1995, 2001) as a lens for understanding change before introducing Ericson's theoretical framework. The literature review chapter will conclude with a review of the aim of the study and presentation of the research questions. Chapter Four presents the research design and methodological questions. Chapter Five introduces the case institution and tells us how the research unfolded in practice and this will be followed by a presentation of the findings in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven discusses the findings in relation to the literature and research questions. Chapter Eight presents final conclusions, limitations and personal reflections.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This literature review explores relevant literature in the fields of higher education, organizational behavior and management. As this research is concerned with how staff members make sense of change, the literature on the rhetoric of change and change in HE (with particular reference to Japan) is presented in the foreground. Secondly, literature on Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education is explored. Finally, the two theoretical constructs of Weick (1979, 2001) and Ericson (2001), which are applied in this study, are presented. This chapter concludes by stating the aims of the study, the detailed points of enquiry and the research questions that provided the focus of this study.

### **2.2. Change**

The overall aim of this section is to highlight the research, which is often of an interdisciplinary nature, on organizational change with a particular emphasis on organizational change in HE institutions. It begins by providing an overview of organizational change before focusing specifically on change in higher education institutions.

#### **2.2.1. Organizational Change**

The following section will detail a brief history of organizational change theories before examining the context of higher education. Organizational change ‘is central to and pervades management researchers’ thinking on organizations’ (Ford and Ford, 1994:756). There can be much confusion surrounding the definitions of change in organizations. Essentially, when we are talking about change in an educational institution, we can imagine that we are looking at the change in the organization as a whole entity; there is a

change in the form or quality of the organization over time. Porras and Robertson (1992) presented a framework for better understanding change (Table 2.2.1). Their framework can be used to categorize the type of change the organization faces. It is based on the category of change (planned or unplanned) and the order (first or second). In their definition, planned change comes from a decision that is made by the organization with the specific goal to improve the function of the organization. This type of change occurs when the organization has to respond to external demands. On the other hand, unplanned change is a type of change that come from outside the system and is something that the organization must respond to. It is more spontaneous or even accidental.

**Table 2.2.1 Types of Change based on Porras and Robertson (1992)**

Order of Change	Change Category	
	Planned	Unplanned
First	Developmental	Evolutionary
Second	Transformational	Revolutionary

According to Porras and Robertson (1992), first order change is linear and maintains the fundamental base of the organization. While second order change is multi-dimensional, discontinuous and can even be radical, resulting in a paradigm shift within the organization.

Rajagopalan & Spreitzer (1996) define strategic change as encompassing two aspects: 1) changes in the content of a firm's strategy; and 2) changes in the external environment and organization brought about to initiate and implement changes in the content of strategy. An accreditation procedure in a HE institution is, by definition, a process that initiates and seeks the implementation of changes in the context of the strategy of the organization.

There are a number of perspectives on organizations as detailed by Hatch (1997, 2000), such as classic, modern, symbolic-interpretive and post-modern, which help researchers to make sense of organizations. Demers (2007) refer to previous work on organizational

change that was based on better understanding the meaning-process required for change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Studies of organizational change are exhaustive. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) provide a thorough overview of theory and research in the 1990's that highlights all the major theories of recent times. Change has usually been studied by applying theories to contexts and this is what this study sets out to do. Most literature in the field see the organization as a single unit of analysis (Selznick, 1957) that needs to be 'understood' but since research has become more interdisciplinary, there is now a focus on examining social and cultural factors and the environment around the organization to gain a better understanding of the organization (Daft and Weick, 1984; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The research in this field focuses on a number of 'models' of change. A full explanation of all the models is beyond the scope of this paper but a few prominent theorists will be presented as they help to better understand the concept of change in higher education. The founding model of change by Lewin (1951) focused on the three stage model for change, where change starts with what he termed 'unfreezing' followed by 'moving' and 'unfreezing.' Lewin (1951) was the primary researcher to explore the idea of group dynamics and how issues of social conflict could be resolved through behavioral change. Although he understood the need to analyze groups and how people interacted, his planned change model received criticism as it was deemed an inappropriate means to deal with change at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Nonaka, 1988a, 1988b; Pettigrew, et.al. 2001). Additionally, researchers such as Pettigrew, et al. (2001) criticized the way that Lewin did not address power dynamics in the organization, while Kanter, et.al (1992) and Wilson (1992) criticized the way he appeared to favor a top-down approach to managing change.

Tichy and Devanna's (1986:31) model also follows a similar three-step process, but theirs is referred to in terms of 'Acts' like in a play or performance. Another model is that of Nadler and Tushman (1995) who created a matrix of change model that consists of what they term, tuning, reorientation, adaptation and recreation. A brief look at these

models is sufficient for this study in order to show awareness of the field but in this study, change is seen as dynamic (Weick, 1995) and as such models that have a planned approach to change are not applicable.

A focus on institutional theory studies is worthwhile since researchers argue that change is impacted by institutional processes (Meyer, Scott and Deal, 1981; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) and the behaviour of the members of the institution. From the 1960's scholars have tried to define organization and what was termed the professional archetype (Miller and Friesen, 1984) was the focus of study. A university would be considered an archetypal professional organization; as such it is useful to draw comparisons between professional organizations and corporate organizations (Hall, 1968). March and Olsen (1976) described 'organized anarchy' and further research by Brock, Powell and Hinings, (1999) characterized professional organizations as places where professionals hold power, they engage in collective decision making, and where change can be slow. In this enquiry, Weick and Quinn's (1999) typology of change as continuous is used as a definition of the change occurring the case university. In this instance, the change occurring at the university is ongoing and constant. The change is the result of the accreditation procedure coupled with the results of everyday interactions, decisions and routines that have been accumulating. It is thought that first-order change is occurring (Weick and Quinn, 1999) as the university is working within a stable framework and that the change is altering the university's internal practices and missions but it doesn't question the integrity of the organization (Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001). Gioia, Thomas, Clark and Chittipeddi (1994) argued that strategic change involves a redefinition of the organization's mission and purpose.

### **2.2.2. Change in Higher Education**

Institutions cannot avoid change (Mulford, 2002) yet change is not often favored by institutions. There are numerous definitions of organizational change; Burnes (1996) defines it as understanding alterations within organizations on two levels; an individual and a collective level, while Van de Ven and Poole (1995) observe differences over time.

Burnes (1996), Goodman, (1982), Levy and Merry, (1986), and Rajagopalan and Spreitzer (1996), examined the why and the how; the reasons for change. In the higher education sector, Michael Fullan and Geoff Scott ignited the debate on leadership in times of change and Fullan's (1982, 1993, 1999, 2001a,b, 2011) work clearly articulates the rhetoric of change in HE in the 21st century. In this study, the context of change is defined as any empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity, where the entity may be an individual's job, a work group, an organizational strategy, a program, a product, or the overall organization (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Initially, it is important to establish the difference between micro and macro issues in HE. As Kretovics (2011) states, at the macro level, HE is an industry of its own and at the micro level, each institution is a business within this wider context. The macro level is that HE is an industry and we assume that all industries create value. It is argued that the structure of this industry and the changing world order mean that entry barriers to this industry are low. For example, advances in technology provide opportunities for moving outside the proximities of a campus, and buyer power is also increasing. If we look at other industries that have experienced strategic change, they have moved towards specialization and vertical disintegration. There is a seismic shift in HE; globalization, the knowledge-economy, demographic shifts and the neo-liberal movement have caused changes to accountability, assessment and accreditation, access, funding, and the main clients. Through discussions with colleagues and through the literature, I have understood neoliberalism to be a way of referring to economic and political policies that are based on having faith in the benefits that arise from existing in free markets. It is said that neo-liberal goals are embedded in our ways of thinking and the characteristics of institutions. For example, there is a focus on privatization, deregulation, competition and a withdrawal of state funding. For an extensive review of neo-liberalism in higher education in Japan, please see Yokoyama (2008). It is a commercial and practical way of viewing higher education. Higher Education today is thus faced with somewhat of a deteriorating industry structure that needs to be addressed. Students are no longer only students but workers, learners, consumers, clients of the institution with differing levels

of involvement in the institution. A substantial amount of literature examines the commodification of HE along with the metaphor of student as consumer (Ivancevich and Ivancevich, 1992; Measelle and Egol, 1992; Hernon and Nitecki, 2001; Phipps, 2001). There has also been much debate surrounding *who* the consumers of higher education are. Internal consumers are teachers and students while external consumers are parents, local authorities and employers. Criticism of the metaphor can be seen in the work by Albanese (1999) and Sirvanci, (1996) who both maintain that this metaphor is not only incorrect but also that utilizing it can be damaging to the reputation of HE.

Barnett (2011) explains that it is a necessity to become a corporate university and as universities are faced with changing external conditions, they themselves must decide what they want to be and how they want to operate in the future. Procedures such as accreditation procedures can provide clear opportunities for the institutions to step back and examine how they can embrace the new opportunities and new operating conditions. Commonality and transparency have resulted in the development of many types of university. In many cases, the university becomes an entity unto itself and develops a corporate identity. It is common for universities to have mission statements and corporate strategies posted on their websites and in marketing materials. Many accreditation and audit procedures ask for the institution to clearly identify these aims. The increase in corporate management practices means that academics must develop different ties and identities to the institution. Research indicates that in the past, academics may have just been affiliated with academics in their field and particularly their department, but with the number of inter-university committees increasing, academics are finding themselves working with others in a new capacity for the university. They are now responsible for assisting with marketing and branding; they are deeply involved in student support and campus facilities. They are no longer able to focus on research and teaching. Taking an administrative role is an increasing part of a university academics life. At times, faculty are resistant to these changes in job roles and functions and also question the purpose of a university, its role in society and their role as academics.

Not all institutions are able to change. There are a number of reasons for an institutions inability to change. Firstly, there are so called change adverse institutions or individuals within the institution. Characteristics of these include; institutions with inefficient leaders who have poor decision-making skills and a lack of focus; disengaged staff, staff who have an unresponsive ‘why don’t they’ not a ‘why don’t we’ attitude (Scott, 2008); poor quality management systems; lack of sufficient time to implement change; and a clear lack of standards (Fullan, 2009). Scott, Coates, & Anderson, (2008) argue for the need to develop a change-capable culture in HE institutions. They list change-capable universities as:

- ✓ Undefensive
- ✓ Evidence-based
- ✓ Able to set priorities
- ✓ Able to make a hard decision
- ✓ Able to make clear who is responsible for what
- ✓ Acknowledge that all staff have a role to play
- ✓ Focused on outcomes
- ✓ Able to ensure that complex, hierarchical approval systems are only used when justified
- ✓ Able to ensure all meetings are justified
- ✓ Operating in a responsive, collaborative and team-based fashion
- ✓ Able to make things work by trailing them
- ✓ Strategically networked

All of these studies and approaches to change and managing change in higher education have been concisely summarized by Kezar (2001). He provides a useful summary of the set of research-based principles that have emerged from research on HE institutional change:

- Promote organizational self-discovery
- Are aware of how institutional culture affects change
- Realize that change in higher education is often political
- Lay groundwork for change

- Focus on adaptability
- Construct opportunities for interaction to develop new mental models
- Strive to create homeostasis and balance external forces with internal environment
- Combine traditional teleological tools such as establishing vision, planning or strategy with social-cognition, cultural and political strategies
- Are open to disorderly processes
- Facilitate shared governance and collective decision-making
- Articulate core characteristics
- Focus on image
- Connect the change process to individual and institutional identity
- Create a culture of risk and help people in changing belief systems

These provide a useful set of principles to consider when conducting research on change in HE. In summary, the key parameters of change are the undoing of the existing hierarchy of HE as an industry. On a micro level we can see the changing hierarchy within individual universities. On a micro and macro level we can see the increased accountability. As such, key stakeholders take an evolving role in HE, which takes them from passive to active agents.

One parameter of change HE as mentioned above is the shift towards greater accountability in higher education. The following section explores the need for accreditation and assessment in HE and how this relates to change. It also focuses on change specific to higher education in Japan, primarily as a result of higher education reform.

### **2.2.3. Context of Japan**

A major societal affect on the changing face of higher education in Japan is the declining birthrate and aging population. A recent OECD report stated that by 2050 the population

would have decreased by 25%. Traditionally, Japanese HE has been known for its large university participation rate and this has led to a reassessment of the accreditation and evaluation trends and reforms necessary. The biggest educational reform imposed by the government in HE in Japan was in 2004 when each of Japan's 87 national universities was given an independent corporation status. Although they are still part of the public sector, after 2004, they are expected to be independently managed. An extensive explanation of these reforms can be found in the reports compiled by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER). Even though many researchers have been engaged in comparative studies on Japanese HE (Amano, 1980; 1985; 1988a; 1994; 1995; 1996; 2000; 2001; Hood, 2001a,b; McVeigh, 1997, 2001, 2002; Goodman, 2001; Cummings, 1986) most of the constructive criticism of Japanese HE has not been adequately published in English. Amano's (2001) is the most cited work in its field and deals with macro-level problems such as the commodification of HE, *kisei kanwa* (deregulation), *tayooka* (diversification) and *koseika* (individualization).

A substantial amount of literature has focused on the decline in applicants to Japanese universities. Some universities have seen the number of their applicants decline by as much as 90% (Goodman, 2005). This is crucial for private universities because their income is heavily dependent on the student numbers with some facing financial collapse. Kinmonth (2005) has stated that universities need to respond much more rapidly to such change and those institutions should be looking to find 'consumers' in new markets. For example, recruiting students from families that may not have attended college before could be some way of redressing this decline. Research shows the university may find itself facing another set of issues related to this new demographic in the student body (Goodman, 2005). It is now widely recognized that universities are part of the economy and that in recent years there has been a shift from institution to industry. Fairclough (1995) and other researchers have highlighted the use of 'market terminology' in HE; and the 'commodification of HE;' while Gumpert (2000, p.70) referred to the 'production metaphor' in HE. These ideas also relate to the previous discussion of globalization. Gibbs and Knapp (2002, p.2-3) provide educators with a handbook on the marketing process for universities, 'written in the language of educators.' Although they state that

marketing is a 'process that can make a positive contribution to both social and economic capital' it could be said that their approach results in the oversimplification of this complex and controversial issue removing all emphasis on the humanistic side of teaching and reducing the university student to a 'consumer.' They also state that, 'education has very complex programs and products'. All of the above studies, were based on western models in the U.S. Fujita (1999, p.1) a Tokyo University professor, highlighted that the 'commodification' of education was 'lurking in the background' of debates on standardized education thus, there is a tendency "to accept as a guiding principle of reform a way of thinking that treats education as a commodity.' With this trend gaining significance, universities have been finding themselves presented with the need to 'do something' in light of declining student numbers and as such they are looking to empirical research to present them with models and theories that can be applied to their institution. Yet, while many administrators are attempting to move with this shift, they are facing increasing pressure from educators within in their institution whose mission is vocational not administrative. Despite the differing views of utilizing private management practices in HE institutions in other parts of the world (Deem, 2001; Goldspink, 2007; Teichler, 2003) Japanese private universities are undoubtedly following 'managerial values' (Teichler, 2003) in the pursuit of success and accredited status. The following section will further discuss issues relating to globalization and international in higher education and their impact on reform and change.

## **2.4. Globalization and Internationalization**

The impact of globalization on HE in general has been given much attention (Green, 2006; Vaira, 2004; Deem, 2007; Scott, 2000; Fullan, 2007). As Turner and Robinson (2008: p.4) stated, internationalization provides 'challenges to locally valid educational and intellectual customs and practices in the face of cultural diversity.' This is very much the case in Japan, in terms of critical thinking, pedagogy, and policy. Lincione stated in 1993, that the *kokusaika* (internationalization) movement in Japan has 'become enmeshed in an ideological and political struggle over the aims, content and control of education' (1993: p.123). This statement can still be applied to the current state of

internationalization and higher education in Japan where policies are proactive, yet elitist (Ninomiya in Amano, 2009). However, this description does not go far enough. It can be argued that they are also contradictory and discriminatory, limiting the extent to which Japan will be able to remain in control of the development of its country and education system in the future.

Rationales for internationalization often comprise a ‘complex and multi-leveled set of reasons which evolve over time and in response to changing needs and trends’ (Knight, 1999: p.20). In Japan the social/cultural rationale in the determination to preserve and promote national culture is apparent; yet, it could be argued that it is at the expense of acknowledging cultural diversity of other countries. This coincides with a hidden agenda of economic rationales. The ideological struggle over the purpose, definition, and content of internationalization in educational discourse in Japan shows a clear polarization between approaches. The accreditation of higher education institutions enables them to be recognized and classified against institutions around the world. The following section will present such procedures in Japan.

### **2.2.5. Change, Japan and Higher Education**

Working in organizations in Japan, research and reading has naturally focused on researchers working in my context. As such, the following section will provide an overview of research on organizational change that will include specific references to the Japanese context.

A discussion of Japan and organizational change cannot ignore the concept of *Kaizen*. *Kaizen* is part of a change scenario of continuous change. It seeks continuous ongoing improvements and alignments in order to achieve success. Imai (1986) introduced the *Kaizen* approach to western managers and researchers, which was translated as ‘continuous improvement’ (Lillrank and Kanno, 1989). This resulted in a swell of

research on the topic especially when it was connected to Total Quality Management (TQM) (Imai, 1986). The word derives from the two compounds *Kai*, which means ‘to change’, and *Zen*, which means to ‘do good’. Thus, literally translated it means to continually change and make good. It is often used in Japanese in connection with the word *Kairyo*, which means ‘process improvement.’ As such, *Kaizen* is process orientated and if done correctly, it will improve standards. Imai argues that standards must be part of the process, as benchmarks and that there must be constant small changes. The PDCA cycle, which stands for *Plan, Do, Check and Act*, is a key part of the process. He also argues that in order for true *Kaizen* to be achieved, it must involve everyone in the organization. This whole approach to change will be seen in the next chapter, when the JUA accreditation procedure is explained and an understanding of it here within the literature will help to contextualize the JUA accreditation procedures.

Another concept that emerges from studies of organizational change is that of knowledge. How much do people know about the organization, what goes on there and what will happen in the future? (Polanyi, 1967; Reber, 1989, Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). It is often also divided into two classifications; tacit and explicit (Polanyi, 1967 cited in Bloodgood and Morrow, 2003). It is one of the ways that an organization or institution can develop and share their vision. How much people know about an organization can impact on how the organization changes and how it is run. My first real encounter and understanding of the importance of knowledge transfer in strategic change came through reading work by Japanese professors, Nonaka, Toyama, et.al. (2000). They explain that one of the many characteristics of knowledge is that it is created by people in relationships; that it is related to specific contexts and created through social interactions. Nonaka (1988) explains the importance of a *Kata* (a creative routine), Literally translated it means the 'way of doing things.' Those familiar with *Karate* will be familiar with these routines that increase in difficulty for each awarded belt. The purpose of a *Kata* in Japanese is that by repeating a creative routine many times, people can sharpen their senses and notice the differences between each round. In business, this means that organizations must continue to conduct routines in order to better understand the knowledge of the organization. It helps organizations and employees engage in self-

evaluation and improvement processes. Nonaka's work on the concept of Ba (as a context where he believes knowledge and meaning is created) also argues that people understand change through others. An example of this in Japan is what is called the *Asakai* (the morning meeting). The purpose of the *Asakai* is for all members of the organization to sit together and discuss what has happened, the organization's vision and strategy, providing an opportunity for knowledge creation. Nonaka's work is grounded in Japanese culture and an understanding of it has provided a useful basis for this research. To summarize, his work is based on a constructivist understanding of knowledge

Connected to knowledge, ideas of informedness and change, is the concept of ambiguity (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972). There can be ambiguity surrounding the intention of the change, the purpose of the change and one's role in the change. They argue that there are four types of opaqueness in organization and that ambiguity is a major factor in decision-making and change. It is also connected to culture and roles and responsibilities and cultural ambiguity, Martin and Meyerson (1988:p.112) conclude that there is evidence in research that people find the state of ambiguity unsettling and uncomfortable. Weick (1995) refers to ambiguity but stresses the difference between ambiguity and uncertainty; but citing them as occasions for sensemaking. He defines ambiguity as 'an ongoing stream that supports several interpretations at the same time' (Weick, 1995:91). This will be discussed in more detail in proceeding sections. As this study is situated in a Japanese context, it is important to note the Japanese culture of ambiguity (Hotta, 2012). Hotta (2012) argues that ambiguity is the basis of Japanese business systems and that when ambiguity is denied, diversity and success is lost. He cites employee evaluation systems and job descriptions as examples of ambiguity of systems within the organization and draws on work by Oe (1995) that argues Japanese are ambiguous by nature.

The culture of the institution during change is evolving (Weick and Quinn, 1999). As Schein (1992) ascertains, culture runs deep in the organization and is underpinned by stakeholders assumptions and understanding. One cannot begin to examine change in organizations without first considering roles and responsibilities of those inside the organization; those stakeholders who implement, direct, and take the change. It is

important to look between floors at all levels of employees in the organization to understand the impact and effectiveness of the change. In this case study, I am examining what could be defined as planned, intentional change, where there is a change agent (the accreditation) that is a catalyst for the change (Lippitt, Watson and Westly, 1958). It is therefore of paramount important to consider how those in the organization perceive the change and react to the change (Powell et al, 1999). Before, during and after the change many stakeholders often take on multiple roles as highlighted by Taylor (2006). Some of these roles may be new and may require retraining or additional responsibilities. These must be carefully examined and considered throughout the research as these have an additional impact on identity and morale. Evans, (2000) found that individuals' different responses to change directly influenced their morale, job satisfaction and motivation. Lee, et al. (2011) in Malaysia found that leadership, belongingness, environment, personal development and collegiality contributed to teachers' morale. Graber, et al. (2008) found that when staff were involved in an improvement initiative, staff burned out or lost morale as a result of the collaborative duties and that effective training and strong leadership and guidance resulted in increased morale.

In change situations, leadership and management are key components to successfully facilitating the change. Research suggests that there are variations in leadership and management styles (Mintzberg, 1993). As an example, Mintzberg (1993) refers to the style of professional bureaucracy that fosters a bottom-up approach to management and a slow methodical introduction of change. There are various types of leadership characteristics outlined in the literature (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Conger and Kanungo, 1998). A leader is often said to be the person who can transform the organization through change-transformational leadership; as this person will have the right characteristics to carry the vision of the institution or organization to the future (Hatch, 1997; Porras and Roberstson, 1992). The culture of the institution is also said to be heavily influenced by the leader, as they are the ultimate source of the organizations' culture (Schein, 1992 and Mumford, et.al, 2002). Those following the leader can have similar or differing perceptions of the leadership and culture of the institution and thus

the difference between leadership and management must be recognized (Kotter, 1998).

An entirely exhaustive look at organizational change is beyond the scope of this paper, yet a familiarity with the main themes in the field can provide a more solid basis for exploring change in higher education institutions. In this case, the Japan University Accreditation Association calls for an incremental change to the organization where the accreditation cycle, that is laid out in their documents, calls for continuous improvement as part of the quality management process. In conjunction with a planned change, a strategic plan devised by the internal committee needs to be implemented to accomplish the change. The following section will focus on an exploration of the Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education, with a particular focus on the Japanese experience.

### **2.3. Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

The changing idea of higher education; changes in funding, changing student profiles, growing interest from the state and associated demands for increased accountability, and a global concern with quality and standards have lead to the establishment of quality assurance agencies. Yet, how is ‘*quality*’ defined? Harvey and Williams (2010a, 2010b), Harvey and Green (1993), Harvey (2006) and Kis (2005) have significantly contributed to and provided reviews of the literature on quality assurance (QA) in HE. Harvey and Williams (2010a, 2010b) provide an exhaustive review of fifteen-years of research in Quality Assurance in HE.

#### **2.3.1. Definitions of Quality**

Quality is particularly problematic to conceptualize and define, in both English and Japanese. Quality can be ‘multi-faceted’ as Frazer (1992) defined, and ‘slippery and value-laden’ (Harvey and Green, 1993). Scott (1994) goes as far as to suggest that there is no authoritative definition of quality in higher education.

Further review of the literature (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2006) shows that we can view quality from a variety of perspectives; as a mechanism, as a form of excellence, as perfection, as a decision as to whether or not something is fit for purpose, as value for

money, or as transformation. The following section will highlight the categorizations that relate to this case.

Initially, quality as a mechanism (Harvey and Newton, 2005) makes reference to the process of the assessment. There are three main mechanisms for measuring quality in HE institutions; assessment, audit and accreditation. Assessment is seen as a quantitative evaluation (Woodhouse, 1999). Audits focus on the processes that are implemented by HE institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Dill, 2000). Accreditation is the method most utilized around the world. With many country models based on the United States accreditation models (Eaton, 2004). Essentially, the process of accreditation is a yes/no decision (Woodhouse, 1999). In this case study the mechanism is accreditation.

Quality as a form of excellence is associated with standards, it has various connotations and can be related to such ideas as benchmarking, league tables, etc (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2006). The assurance is done through an external evaluation, such as an accreditation. If we look at quality as a fitness for purpose, we are asking if the university is fulfilling its mission. The accreditation association is defining standards.

Finally, quality as transformation (Harvey and Knight, 1995) is when quality can develop or empower students through the learning process and when institutions can change to do better research or have wider access.

There are many implications for institutions as they go through a QA process. The universities themselves are responsible for quality and standards, and are held accountable by outside agencies and governments. As such QA systems must be transparent and should include some focus on self- assessment, reflection and evaluation.

The case in this study is going through the process of the JUAA accreditation procedure, to use the definitions from the literature above, in this case, quality is seen as fitness for

purpose; as excellence and as a mechanism.

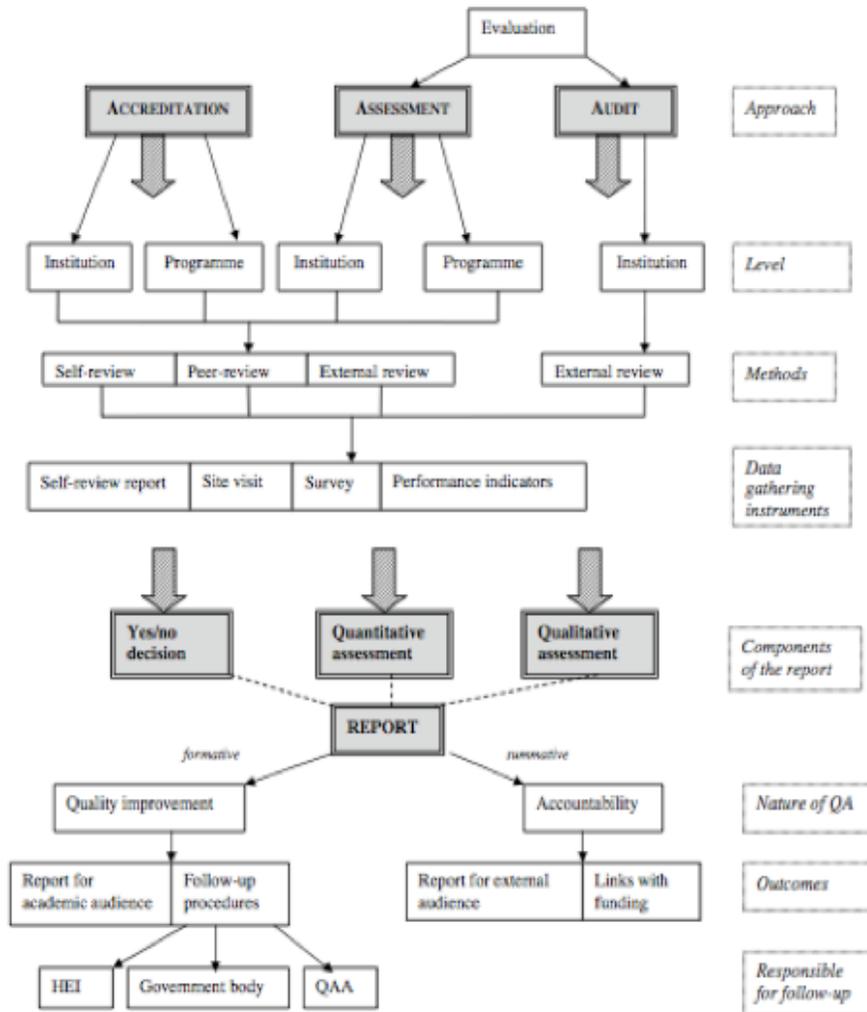
Table 2.3.1 provides a chronological summary of additional research in this field and those studies of particular relevance to this case. Additionally, Figure 2.3.1 highlights the elements of QA systems according to Kis (2005). The following section will explore the QA from a Japanese perspective.

**Table 2.3.1: Prominent research in QA**

<b>Researcher(s)</b>	<b>Concepts Discussed</b>	<b>Considered of particular reference to this study</b>
Garvin (1984)	Produced definitions and approaches to quality related to business	*
Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995)	Discussed the functions of accountability and quality improvement	*
Dill (1995)	Related QA to social capital	
Thune (1996)	Discussed the combination of accountability and quality improvement	
Barrett (1996) Moon and Geall (1996)	Discussed Total Quality Management	*
Melrose (1998)	Paradigms of curriculum evaluation	*
Dill (2000)	Discussed audits	
Tam (2001)	Application of Models	

Lomas (2002)	Utilized Harvey & Green's (1993) definitions as a framework	*
Faber and Huisman (2003)	Researched on accreditation in Europe	*
Scheele (2004)	Researched on accreditation in Europe	*
Leong and Wong (2004) Blackmur (2004)	Discussed National Qualification Frameworks	
Saarien (2005)	Discussed the discursive construction of 'quality' and 'assessment'	*
Dano and Stensaker (2007)	Discussed external quality assurance	*
Houston (2007)	Discussed Total Quality Management	*
Fernie and Pilchr (2009)	Discussed National Qualification Frameworks	*

**Figure 2.3.1. Quality Assurance Systems (based on Kis, 2005)**



The accreditation procedure is concerned with accountability and procedure. Thune (1996) states that accountability and improvement are mutually exclusive, but it is difficult to ascertain whether improvements can be gained through the process of accreditation. How can we measure improvements? Stensaker (2003) argues that, ‘accountability v improvement’ is a simplified view of change in higher education; that it is a cause and effect relationship and not on a continuum. One way of thinking about change in HE is by examining a particular context of HE (Baird, 1988; Fry, 1995; Nordvall and Braxton, 1996) and the quality of that context.

Both external and internal reviews of HE accreditation are covered. External reviews are those conducted by accreditation agents who write reports about what they have observed on visits to the university and the documents the university submitted. Internal reviews are reviews conducted by faculty members as they reflect on what they have been contributing to the institution and the institution as a whole. There are various arguments for and against such an approach. Harvey (2002) argues that reviews are a catalyst for improvement, as they can improve the relationship between the HE institution and the outside body. Thune (1996) argues that such an approach can increase internal and external credibility and transparency. Yet the internal reviews can be susceptible to what DeVries (1997) terms as write-ups, when institutions write-up and embellish their review reports for the purpose of compliance. Having such internal reviews are also a great pressure on faculty members' time. Increased workload (Askling, 1997, Stephenson, 2004, Rasmussen, 1997) is a common complaint from faculty. Pressure to follow the rules can limit growth and innovation as institutions focus on meeting particular standards. The peer review strategy (Brennan, 1997) also utilized in Japan between different sections of the university can also lead to power imbalances between faculty and staff. Additional pressure can result in weakening relations between faculty and staff. The peer review strategy involves one group of the university (a faculty, department, research center or administrative section) observing another group and evaluating it. Institutions are judged via qualitative and quantitative methods. These equate to examining the difference between performance in numbers and performance on a more holistic basis. Faculty members also often express disillusionment over the way research and teaching is evaluated through the accreditation procedure and a feeling of 'distrust' and 'window dressing' can occur (Weijnen, 2007: p.132).

It can be difficult to measure the impact of quality assurance (Brennan, 1997) but as a way of examining this, this research will focus on exploring the organizational change that results from the quality assurance procedures within the institution and how members of the institution see this change. Despite the fact, that less research has been done on the impact of accreditation on students and that this is an area in need of research, research on staff, internal procedures, and management structures in HE institutions in Japan was

still deemed worthy of study due to the limited amount of research conducted in this area in the Asian context. I also note the need to consider other sources that might have an impact on change and this will be dealt with in the following sections. As Askling (1997) suggests, a search for the impact of accreditation should be undertaken with openness for simultaneous events and changes exerting pressure on the entire system.

### **2.3.2. Context of Higher Education Accreditation and QA in Japan**

A great deal of literature has been produced about accreditation of HE institutions in Japan (Yonezawa, 2002; McVeigh 2001; Hood, 1983; Aoki, 2005; Clark, 2005), yet the majority of this work is in Japanese and inaccessible to a wider audience. Also, both Japanese and non-Japanese researchers have spent limited time examining the system. A number of researchers have looked at the problems in Japanese HE and attributed them to the lack of accountability and quality control present in the system as a whole (Cutts, 1997; McVeigh, 1997, 2001, 2002). Despite the fact that Japan has moved towards an audit-type culture in HE many researchers still disagree on the effectiveness of Japanese HE accreditation procedures (Goodman, 2001; Shore & Wright, 1999; Eades, 2000). The general discourse of research on accreditation in Japan can be confined to three points; descriptive accounts, research connected to internationalization and comparative studies. Japanese higher education systems have a 'dual sector structure' (Yonezawa, 2002). This refers to national and local, public and private institutions, which utilize two structures of evaluation and accreditation. Much research focuses on detailing these systems. For example, Yonezawa's (2002) research examines both systems; yet, his account is more descriptive and less of a critical approach. He ascertains that a structure similar to Europe is used in the public system, while the structure of the private system is more aligned to the American system of accreditation (Yonezawa, 2002). This duality therefore means that an analysis of these accreditation structures and wider societal issues associated with it, present particular problems. Not only is there a clear division between private and public universities, but also, as Eades (2005) suggests, there are also two types of academic cultures that co-exist in Japanese HE. One culture can be likened to how academia is viewed in western countries, with 'world class' institutions engaging in internationally recognized research, while the second culture is a more localized culture

that does not join the ranks of the ‘world class’ universities. These dualities lead to the second strand of research on accreditation in Japan, which focuses on internationalization. With the introduction of other evaluation mechanisms such as OECD rankings and the Japanese University Center of Excellence Programs (see Eades, 2005 for more detailed information), the results of such accreditations can often be conflicting and confusing to both potential students and faculty. This research tends to focus on the outcomes and competition between universities needed for institutions to be classified as ‘global’ institutions. The final strand of research is comparative studies. These studies examine how the Japanese system is similar or different to another system, such as the most recent work by Mulvey, Winskowski and Comer (2001). Through the above review of the literature, I was unable to find a study that looked at the impact of the accreditation on faculty in Japan.

Based on the literature above, there are many elements at play when we consider organisational change, quality assurance/accreditation and the Japanese experience. This work is positioned as a study of how staff members deal with the case of organizational change that has been as a result of the accreditation procedure. As such, organizational change literature was put in the foreground of the study and the following section explores the two frameworks that will be applied in this study to better understand how staff members make sense of the change associated with the accreditation procedure.

## **2.4. Sensemaking**

The following section presents the work by Weick (1979) and Ericson (2001) yet, preceding that, there is a need to clarify why these two constructs were combined. The decision to combine the theoretical constructs of Weick and Ericson stemmed from the criticisms that Weick’s theory could be said to overlook larger social or institutional contexts (Taylor and Van Every (2000). There was a need to see how the institution, society and culture were woven together into sensemaking. As Scott (1995) stated ‘no organization can properly be understood apart from its wider social and cultural context’

(151). It was thought that when considering the Japanese context in this case, it would be preferable to also apply a theory that could better take into consideration Japanese cultural and social contexts (such as issues of cultural homogeneity) to better understand the change process. In Weick's work, identity can answer one key sensemaking question – *who am I?* – but using an additional framework such as Ericson's we can answer the additionally important question of *what is going on here?* in relation to society and culture. A combination of approaches allows a fuller view of the role of context, culture and society in sensemaking.

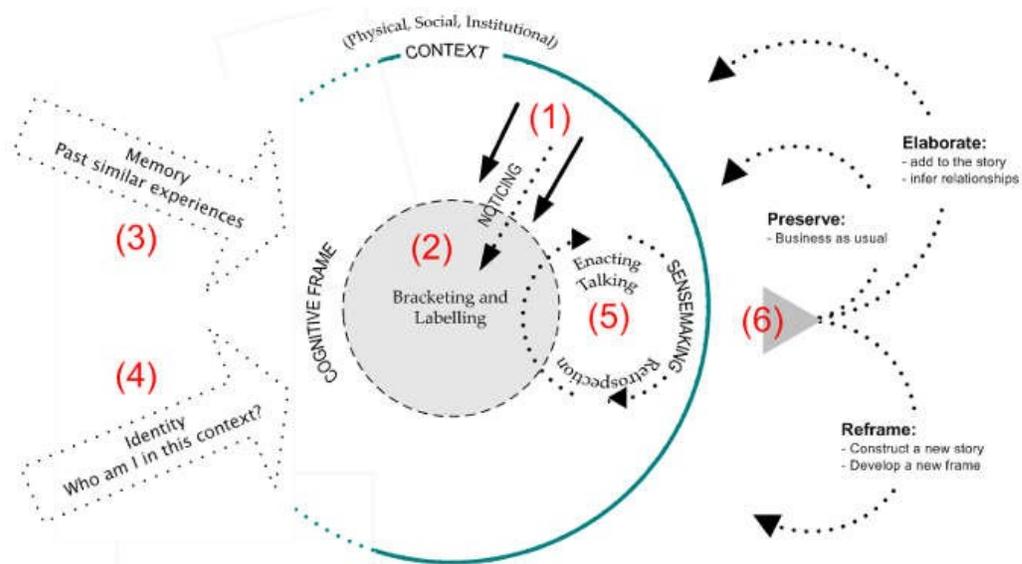
I first encountered the theory of Sensemaking through my research methods paper and the further I explored it, the more convinced I became that it would be a useful concept to through which to explore change in higher education. The concept of sensemaking 'fills important gaps in organizational theory' (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Weick, et.al. (2005, p. 409) discuss the three important points about the quest of meaning in organizational life. First, that sensemaking occurs when the flow of organizational circumstances are turned into words. Second, organizing is embodied in written and spoken texts, and third, reading, writing, and editing are crucial actions that serve as the media through which institutions are shaped. As Mills (2003, p. 55) states, identity construction is at the root of sensemaking and 'influences how other aspects, or properties of the sensemaking process are understood.' It is crucial to recognize this fact when conducting sensemaking research and when contemplating the uses of sensemaking as a lens for research. 'Who we think we are (identity) as organizational actors shapes what we enact and how we interpret which affects what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity. Essentially, who we are lies in the hands of others' (Weick, et.al., 2005, p. 416). This statement requires the researcher to be cautious of his/her position as an insider or outsider throughout the research and will be discussed in following sections. When the same information is distributed among various parties, each party has a different impression of what is happening. It can be problematic to reconcile these various views as 'people's ability to sense make is most tested when they encounter events they consider to be extraordinary and implausible' (Brown and Humphreys, 2003:p.123).

Much research has utilized sensemaking when examining organizations undergoing change or crisis (Gioia, 1996; Gioia, 1991; Kezar, 2002; Thomas, Clark & Gioia, 1993; Drazin, Glynn and Kazanjian, 1999; Maitlis, 2005; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; O'Connell and Mills, 2003). 'Sensemaking is about such things as placement of items in frameworks, comprehending, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding and patterning' (Weick, 1995:6). Weick (1995) presents seven of the properties of sensemaking:

1. Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction
2. Sensemaking is retrospective
3. Sensemaking is enactive of sensible environments
4. Sensemaking is social in nature
5. Sensemaking is ongoing
6. Sensemaking is focused on and extracted by cues
7. Sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

These characteristics are not stand-alone items; they are dependent on each other and all have relevance when discussing particular situations. It is recognized that sensemaking starts with chaos (Weick, et al. 2005). In this case, examples include the following aforementioned factors. Staff or learners, consequently, would be continually noticing and bracketing their everyday lives in relation to the change. Labeling will then begin which works through a "strategy of differentiation and simple location, identification and classification, regularizing and routinization to translate the intractable or obscure into a form that is more amenable to functional deployment" (Chia, 2000, p. 517). Are the labels individuals using the same? Are shared beliefs a necessary condition for organized action? And is the construct of collective belief theoretically meaningful? (Porac, in Baum, 2002). Figure 2.4 shows a diagrammatic representation of sensemaking (Howden, 2008).

**Figure 2.4 – The Sensemaking Process (Howden, 2008)**



In this diagrammatic representation of sensemaking, step (1) is where the process begins. People notice that there is something happening - that changes are being implemented. This leads to (2) the bracketing of these ideas and concepts in line with the individual's cognitive frame. Individuals begin to reflect, and make sense retrospectively, based on their memory and past similar experiences (3) and begin to reassess their identity (4). Communication with others in the workplace, either through formal meetings, documents, or via informal chats, leads to enactment, talking and retrospective sensemaking (5). Finally, the result of the sensemaking may result in either reframing of the story to fit current beliefs or a change in people's beliefs and actions (6). The following section will now present each of Weick's characteristics of sensemaking.

First, dealing with identity construction, during the process where the needs that they have for identity are reflected in their organization's identity (ibid.20-21). Weick (1995, p.18-20) ascertains that the 'establishment and maintenance of identity is a core preoccupation of sensemaking'. As mentioned previously, work by Gioia & Thomas (1996) and Brown (2000) also examine aspects of identity and find it a prominent aspect of understanding organizational behaviour. Thomas, Gioia and Clark (1996) examined

the identity of senior managers and asked if identity could be enduring strategic change. Ojiha (2005) examined the relationship between sensemaking and identity development, citing them as two similar theories that impact people's identities within organizations. Much work by Helms-Hatfield (2000) Helms-Hatfield & Mills (1997) and Helms-Mills and Mills (2011) utilized Weick's (1995) theory due to its focus on meaning and identity.

Second, the term retrospective in Weick's work means that sensemaking occurs after an event, 'Sensemaking is based on our experience and so is always retrospective in nature (1995:p.24-30). Yet, Gioia and Mehra (1996) suggest that sensemaking can also be prospective; an attempt to make sense of the future. Thirdly, enacting sensible environments is essentially how we construct reality. Meaning is created and discovered by the way that we act in the world (Weick, 1995, p.30). Sensemaking as a social activity expresses the understanding that it is both individual and social; what could also be individual and organizational. Weick (1995:38) explains that, 'human thinking and social functioning are essential aspects of one another.' Weick believes that 'sensemaking never starts' (Weick, 1995, p.43). Although he refers to 'shocks' (1995, p.45) these are considered to be more disruptions along the flow of sensemaking, rather than the initial start of the sensemaking process. Weick's terms 'Focused on and extracted by cues' highlight the importance he puts on cues in the world around us and how we extract and contextually interpret them. There are thousands of cues that we encounter on a daily basis in our lives and workplace. Some cues work through our filter and these depend on our interests and unconsciousness. Wrzesniewski, Dutton and Debebe (2003) examined interpersonal sensemaking and the meaning of work. They examined the social cues that employees attend to at work to argue that the meaning of work is affected by the interpersonal episodes that people have between each other in the workplace. Finally, Weick ascertains that individuals are not looking for accuracy when they make sense; that they look for plausible explanations of what is going on. We look for the cues that make the sensemaking plausible. Research on sensemaking in crisis situations has shown that outside influences can influence how we accept plausible definitions of what is going on. As an example, O'Connell and Mills (2003) found that the media serve as a disproportionate influence in the creation of organizational

narratives after a crisis.

### **2.4.1. Sensegiving**

Sensegiving is defined as “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred definition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). Gioia & Chittipeddi’s (2006) paper on sensegiving is a useful framework for examining strategic change in universities through focusing on the relationship between sensemaking and sensegiving.

The study above was particularly useful for illuminating the process of the change and the influence of certain groups on each other. It is suggested that there is a symmetrical view of sensemaking and sensegiving and that they are mutually exclusive. However, this is not always the case; Huzzard’s (2004) view that sensegiving is undeniably linked to the power relations which are embedded in the process of disseminating information disputes this. I would be cautious of regarding sensegiving as a means of influencing someone, and would approach a potential sensemaking study with an open view as to whether sensegiving occurs or not. The remainder of this section will address employee sensemaking and how Weick’s framework can be used in an HE setting.

### **2.4.2. Employee Sensemaking and Change**

Employees have discretion to construct meaning of the same objective event differently thus providing a very interesting context for researchers. Much literature suggests that change is driven by top managers, for example, research on sensemaking and performance on top managers (Thomas et al, 1993; Luscher and Lewis, 2008), theoretical models about cognitions and actions (Dutton and Jackson, 1987) and work on threats and opportunity (Chattopadhyay, et al. 2001). Nevertheless, research on grass-roots level employees, particularly faculty in HE institutions, is under researched, with little work on emotions and sensemaking (Maitlis and Vogus, 2008). Marmnout (2010) focused her research on employee sensemaking during a merger and found that employees position influences their perceived power in the merger, but even if they have high power, she

found it still does not reduce uncertainty during the change. Stensaker, Falkenberg, and Gronhaug (2008) looked at corporate change initiatives, and found that although participation in planning facilitates sensemaking at the individual level, it doesn't lead to collective action. Chaudry et al. (2009) examined when and how employees respond to change and developed their own model of how employees view their psychological contract (PC) in the context of organizational change. Using sensemaking as a framework, they argued that understanding the viewpoints of employees could aid managers, assist with change processes and can help develop a mutually productive relationship. In a Japanese context, sensemaking studies have begun to increase since the disaster in March 2011 as researchers are seeking ways of understanding how corporations and businesses made sense of the chaos that engulfed employees. Killduff, Funk and Mehra (1997) took an ethnographic approach and utilized a sensemaking framework to examine identity in a Japanese factory. Yet to date, no research has been found on sensemaking in a Japanese higher education institution either during accreditation or any other change process.

### **2.4.3. Sensemaking Research in Higher Education**

Research on faculty sensemaking in change situations has been increasing steadily over the past decade, yet is still an underdeveloped field, particularly in Asia. Research initially tended to concentrate on school leader's sensemaking and not all research utilizes Weick's framework, but does use an adaptation of the term 'sensemaking' (Coburn, 2005; Gonzales & Rincones, 2011). Gonzales and Rincone's (2011) work discussed the use of organizational scripts by faculty to understand their role but didn't use sensemaking in Weick's sense of the term. Robinson (2010) did when he examined professional identities in conjunction with budgets expectations and worked with faculty and not just school leaders. Another work that influences and informs this study is that by Hora (2008) who took a cognitive approach to institutional change, and recognized that a neatly bounded culture does not exist in HE institutions. Hora (2008) expressed that many studies don't address the degree to which group members do or do not adhere to the dominant knowledge in the organization; something that this research is aiming to do. While research of this nature in Japan is limited, work in Macau, China by Hong and

Lao (2006) explored sensemaking over a two-year period at a HE institution and confirmed the importance of ensuring that transparent communication was vital for effective sensemaking within the organization. In order to better understand and make sense of change, Reynolds and Tyler (2001) called for practitioners to shift their attention to analyzing what they are about as they negotiate between being teachers/and or researcher and managers. That is what this research is setting out to do.

Sensemaking, institutionalism and imagination are all models that put a focus on cognition (Morgan, 1986; Scott, 1995; Weick, 1995). These researchers exemplify a social-constructivist means of looking at the organization that examines the way that people build knowledge of the change and the institution. In 1993, Argyris coined the term cognitive dissonance to describe the situation when learning is said to occur when two pieces of conflicting information come together. Studies such as this one look at how people process information and their perceptions of the institution. Individuals within the institution interpret and make sense of the change and as such change can only be understood by looking at individuals. This idea is at odds with the idea of a shared reality or organizational culture. Through examining the research, Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework, which will be introduced below, seemed to be a useful way to explore this.

## **2.5. Ericson's Conceptual Framework**

In 2001, Ericson developed a sensemaking perspective in order to generate a conceptual framework for increasing understanding of change in organizations (Ericson, 2001, p.109) (See Fig. 2.5). Ericson (2001) utilized Weick's framework and his own conceptual framework for better understanding strategic change in a medical facility.

In his 2001 paper, Ericson begins his research by exploring definitions of change, stating the importance of understanding that the 'processural view' of change is not separate from the 'planning' view of change; he is looking at the formulation **and** implementation of change. He also recognizes the interwoven nature of intentional and unintentional

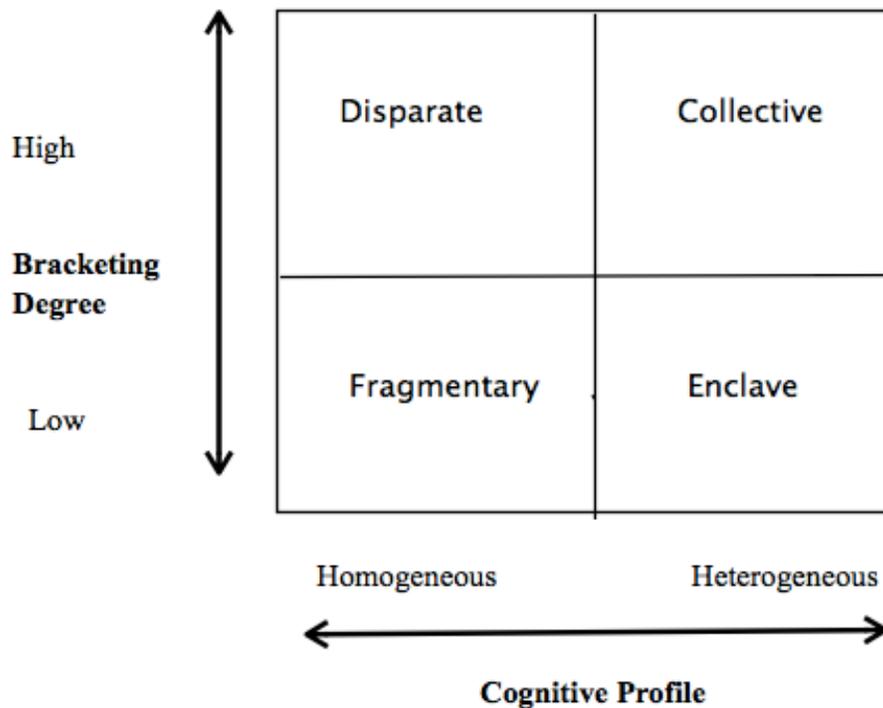
change. He advocates that members of organizations should be treated as active translators of the planned strategies created by top management (p.110) and that by using a sensemaking perspective our knowledge of change can be enhanced if we focus on the way individuals make meaning and make sense of their organizational life (p.111).

Ericson's study was qualitative in nature, based on social constructivist principles. He conducted open-ended interviews during a longitudinal case study of a Swedish university hospital. He was able to access senior and middle management, and was able to explore what was happening 'between floors' (p.111).

His conceptual framework consists of four ideal types of meaning created by individuals in organizations. He argues that a group can either have a heterogeneous or homogenous cognitive profile. In addition to this, he presents four ideal types of meaning: Collective (the cognitive profile of the group is homogeneous), Disparate (the bracketing of the group is high), Fragmentary (the cognitive schemes of individuals are heterogeneous) and Enclave (low degree of bracketing).

In his study, Ericson found that disparate meaning was present in the management team; that the bracketing of the group was high. The management team found it difficult to assign the same meaning to issues being faced by the university but also, they had difficulty bracketing these issues. Ericson's work was deemed useful for applying to a Japanese HE institution for two reasons, first, as it looks at both an individual and collective level within the institution and second, as it was generated through empirical fieldwork which was longitudinal and social constructivist in approach.

**Fig. 2.5 – Ericson’s Conceptual Framework**



Ericson claims that knowledge of change can be enhanced if we focus on the ways individuals create meaning and make sense of their organizational life (Stubbart, 1989, Newton & Johnson, 1998 in Ericson, 2001, p.111). As Salzer-Morling (1998; p.114) points out, ‘an organization can be characterized by homogeneity, consensus and integration’ and also ‘heterogeneity, conflict and differentiation.’ Related to this, Ericson’s study argues that if we wish to understand an organization we need to examine how meaning is created and destructed, and to organize change we need to understand individuals’ subjective meanings and how these meanings alter over time and through the influence of others. As mentioned above, Ericson (2001) identifies ‘between floors’ as a place of special interest for inquiry. This hierarchal aspect of the investigation is particularly interesting if applied in an Asian context, yet it could be suggested that in an Asian context it would be necessary to examine all levels of the organization, not merely the middle-management levels, as this would give a greater overall picture of the

organization. Based on these views and as the medical context which Ericson (2001) investigated was a university hospital, I believe his framework can be applied in the Japanese context to better understand change within a Japanese higher education institution.

The process of “sensegiving” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), where managers try to influence sensemaking and meaning construction of others within the organization towards a preferred redefinition of organized reality, is also intriguing, particularly in Japan as many anthropologists and *nihonjinron* discuss the “vertical principle in Japanese society” (Nakane, 1972, Doi, 1971, 1974). This is the belief that the Japanese are a group-orientated people, thus meaning that individuals prefer to work within a vertically hierarchy organized group or company. The relationships within this organizational structure are based on superiors and subordinates. Psychologist Doi (1971) argued that the Japanese use of the concept ‘*dependency*’, or ‘*amae*’, could be seen to extend beyond childhood to adulthood and into workers’ jobs and roles within a company/organization. Since, as Marcus & Zajonc (1985) suggest, individuals’ cognitive schemes are constructed from earlier experience and, as Ericson (2001: p.118) suggests, the differences in meaning among members of the institution are an effect of differences in cognitive scheme, we cannot ignore the concept of the Japanese vertical principal when researching in a Japanese context or the specific cultural elements in other Asian countries. Conversely, some researchers (Hamaguchi, 1982; Befu, 1987; Dale, 1986; Tamotsu, 1990) argue against this concept of groupism and state that instead, the theory of interpersonalism should be more thoroughly considered. As Guest (2001) advises when discussing aspects of Japanese culture and society, we must be aware of relying on subjective sociological, anthropological, and philosophical discourses, thus reverting to discussing the culture in binary categories as these can affect both the data collection and analysis. Mouer & Sugimoto (1995) and Yoshino (1992) state that researchers should be cautious of referring to *nihonjinron*<sup>3</sup> to support an argument, as it is not relevant to academic discourse. This view has also been supported by others (Kubota, 1999; Susser; 1998 and McVeigh, 1998) and thus, in this study, I would like to acknowledge that there are works, such as the *nihonjinron* and academic papers, which further support these

ideas of reductionism and essentializing of the culture. Yet, I would be wary of accepting the reductionist views found in this literature without critical thought, as an acceptance of these dichotomies could produce false data. With background knowledge of the ideas behind collectivism in Japan and Japanese culture, applying Ericson's framework to a Japanese organization could also shed light upon the influence of culture on change.

## **2.6. Research Questions and Aim of the Research**

As has been outline above, there are various approaches to looking at an institutions going through change. Some organizations are stronger when organization members share values, rules of behaviour, and norms that become crystallized and stabilized, in organization structures (Gray, Boughton, & Donnellon, 1985: p.89). This is because the establishment of a common understanding is important in an organization because it enables organizational activities to become routinized and it helps organizational members achieve a level of commonality and continuity that facilitates organizational action (Greenberg, 1995, p. 185). Conversely, the opposing view states that there are differences between groups in organizations (Brown, 2000) and that, "shared meaning is difficult to attain" (Weick, 1995, in Brown, 2008 page number please). Berger and Luckmann (1967) stress that organizations are social constructions and that organizations largely exist in the mind. As such, research needs to be conducted on how people make sense of change and their institution; the way they process and disseminate information. If an organization is a network, a group of people with shared meanings that are sustained through the development and use of a common language and everyday social interaction, (Walsh & Ungson, 1991) utilizing sensemaking as a lens for examining change is a useful approach. By utilizing Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework of four ideal types of meaning, I propose it is possible to examine if/how the data from this case of the faculty of a Japanese higher education institution undergoing an accreditation, corresponds with the four types of meaning suggested by Ericson (2001). Hora (2008: p2) states that, 'many studies fail to address the degree to which group members adhere (or not) to the dominant knowledge in the organization', and this proposed study would go some way to examining this. Considering these points, this research addresses two

questions:

**RQ1: How do faculty make sense of institutional change related to accreditation?**

**RQ2: How far does this instance correspond to or otherwise illuminate Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework for understanding change?**

These research questions are not intended to confine the enquiry but to define it and in doing so, enable a wide range of issues to be identified for future exploration. In conclusion, this study provides an analysis of an organizational change process related to the accreditation of a Japanese higher education institution. I attempt to apply the theories of sensemaking and Ericson's framework in order to better understand the change process and expand knowledge and understanding of the inner workings of Japanese private universities. Additionally, the study sheds light upon broader issues in higher education such as leadership and management, faculty development, student satisfaction, and the meaning and purpose of higher education. The following section will present the Research Methods of this study.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>Mark</sup> In Japanese language, the term *kisei kanwa* (deregulation) is used more often than *kisei teppai* (abolishment of regulations) yet there is much difference in the terms. The term *kanwa* refers to a 'relaxation' of rules while '*teppai*' means to strongly abolish, therefore 'deregulation' in Japanese could be terms somewhat as a way of maintaining a status-quo and maintaining an ability to resist change

<sup>2</sup> Detailed research and commentary on the Japanese context can be found in Goodman, R. (2007).

<sup>3</sup> These are theories written about the Japanese that are centered around discussions on culture, language, society, psychology, etc. *Ron* means writings/opinions. Approximately 4% of these are written by foreign scholars between 1946-1978). (Source: Nomura Research Institute, Japan). They are often written from the perspective of being a *shimaguni* (an island nation, thus detached from the rest of the world). They have also been cited as examples of cultural nationalism.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This section will chart the methodological discussions central to this research. When undertaking such research it is a given that the researcher will make philosophical commitments to the approach. This includes a commitment to knowledge, a discussion of what is truth, the value of human behaviour and representations of reality; namely discussions of ontology and epistemology. This chapter will include ethical considerations that informed the design; the strengths and limitations of the research design and the guiding theoretical framework. As was introduced in the previous chapter, there are two research questions, which guide this research. Although these are two clear questions, additional case study questions were also identified, as a way of keeping the research on track and these will be explored further on in this chapter.

### 3.2. Theoretical Framework Discussions

As Pring, (2000) notes, researcher's differences in their philosophical positions may be the reason for the variety of approaches we now see in educational research. In ascertaining a framework for study, an initial question is how does the researcher view the nature of human behaviour? The concepts of *erklaren* and *verstehen* form a useful basis for discussion. *Erklaren* being the explanation of human behaviour through detailing a deterministic account of the variables that cause changes in behaviour. Human behaviour is conceptualized as 'necessary responses to empirically discernable and manipulability antecedent conditions or causes' (Outhwaite, 1975). *Verstehen* refers to the interpretative understanding of people's actions in relation to their experience. In contrast, qualitative research has an interest in understanding actors' subjective meanings and interpretations of the world in order to better understand their behaviours.

Wand and Weber (1993: p.20) refer to ontology as ‘a branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world.’ Uschold and King (1995: p.1) describe it as a ‘set of terms and their associated definitions intended to describe the world in question’ (e.g., Uschold and King, 1996:p.1). The section below will seek to answer the question ‘what is the form and nature of reality in relation to this study and what approach will be taken?’

Hirschheim et al. (1995: p.20) define epistemology as ‘the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can possibly be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation.’ It is through research that we see how the two, epistemology and ontology, are linked. We examine how epistemological concerns affect how we make sense of ontology. Our view of knowledge is often dynamic, based on our prior values and experiences. In an organization, the view of knowledge is not only in the minds of individuals but also in the documents, ways of doing things and in processes, routines and practices. Based on the above discussion and to review, it is important to further clarify the position of this research. The way a researcher views the world is essential to understand the chosen research paradigm. An objectivist view and a constructivist view are often considered areas relevant for discussion in sensemaking research. In fact, Weick (1995: p.35) actually advises researchers utilizing the lens of sensemaking to use an ontological oscillation, the idea that it is acceptable to ‘change’ worldview depending on the sensemaking situation. An objective worldview is that truths are unconditional, and absolute (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) where as the constructivist worldview is heavily influenced by all the users; the participants and the researcher themselves. The players actively construct reality, so the dichotomy between epistemology and ontology is often said to be blurred (Guber and Lincon, 1994, p. 111).

In terms of organizational research, Gjernvik (1993) provides a useful analytical framework for considering how reality is socially constructed in organizations. His work drew on previous work by Berger and Luckmann (1967). Analysing sensemaking from a constructivist point of view can be seen as a way of giving meaning to people’s constructions of knowledge in accordance with their ‘local’ reality. In analysing

communication within this framework, we can view communication as a process of social construction.

This research works within a constructivist paradigm based on Guba and Lincoln's (2001) three fundamental assumptions; 1) The basic ontological assumption is relativism; 2) there is no objective truth; 3) Reality is socially constructed. A useful summary comes from Schwandt (2000) who describes constructivist thinking as:

'we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge...in this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it' (Schwandt, 2000:p. 197).

It is the researcher's job to understand the social constructions of knowledge within the research context. In this study, the researcher seeks to examine the teacher's construction of the change and accreditation procedure they experienced and how they made meaning out of them.

The epistemological assumption is transactional subjectivism, in that assumptions about reality and truth depend on the 'meaning sets and degree of sophistication available to the individuals and audiences engaged in forming those assertions. In this instance, the concept of objectivity is replaced by confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) and the context is of paramount importance.

Finally, the methodological assumption is hermeneutic-dialecticism. The assumption is that, research, which follows this paradigm, can only be conducted via interaction between the researcher and respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Eichelberger (1989) provides a useful description of work following a hermeneutic-dialectic tradition:

'[researchers in this tradition] want to know what meaning people attribute to activities...They do a great deal of observation, read documents produced by members of the groups being studied, do extensive formal and informal

interviewing and develop classifications and descriptions that represent the beliefs of the various groups (Eichelberger, 1989: p.9).

Tesch (1990) identifies twenty-six types of qualitative research; therefore, it can be quite demanding to ascertain which method fits the guiding principles of the research along with the practicalities of the study. As described above, the epistemological, ontological debates were not simply about the researchers' position but also how that position relates to the field of sensemaking. In order to understand how people make sense of their everyday world and to understand human behaviour, one must have first-hand contact with people. Due to these underlying beliefs, naturalistic and interpretative approaches, such as ethnomethodology and phenomenology initially seemed to be most fitting with Berger and Luckmann's (1967) belief that individuals socially construct the social world at the level of subjective experience. Approaching this study through interpretivism and ethnography would indicate a holistic, in-depth and localized approach to the study. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity: within the frame of reference of participants as opposed to the observer of action (Burrell & Morgen, 1979, p.28).

Initially, ethnography as opposed to case study, was chosen as the most suitable method for this study. Guba and Lincoln's (2005) discussion of paradigms, places case study, and ethnography on opposing ends of the qualitative paradigm spectrum and it is this distinction that enabled me to make a decision between the two approaches as ethnography is part of the constructivism paradigm, while case study is considered more post-positivist. As such, ethnography could be considered far more suitable for an investigation into individual's behaviours within a particular culture. Goetz & Le Compte (1984: p.2) state that ethnographies are 'analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes or groups, that recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge and behaviours of some group of people.' Ethnography, essentially analyses culture, and aims to uncover the tacit knowledge of the subjects. In the proposed study, to be able to gain this tacit knowledge of a culture different to the researchers own, some would suggest that the only means by which the researcher can

observe this interpersonal interaction and thus uncover the sensemaking occurring within and between these individuals is to become a 'routinely functioning' (Patton, 1990: p.74) member of the group. It is essential to capture the character of human behaviour of those experiencing change and accreditation within the institution, and see how they 'make sense' of the change associated with accreditation. In order to achieve this, combining the methodological approaches of ethnography and interpretative phenomenology in this study was considered to be the most appropriate methodology. Maggs-Rapport (2000) made a compelling argument for this approach to research in nursing studies as ethnography is concerned with the portrayal of social groups and situations in a real life context, while in phenomenology we see how things really are and establish meanings.

An example of the phenomenological approach to accreditation and strategic change would include examining the subjective experiences at the heart of the research and investigating what the experience of change and accreditation is actually 'like'. In addition, an example of the ethnographic approach to accreditation and strategic change would include looking at the impact of the accreditation while studying the culture of the organization and the interactions between members of that organization. Maitlis (2005: p.701) states, observing the organization from a member's perspective is 'essential for studying sensemaking' and ethnography will enable this observation.

Pragmatically, what is seen as useful determines what is true and that the relationships in the research are determined by what the researcher thinks is appropriate to this study. Over the course of further reading, it became apparent that Ethnography might not be the most appropriate method and I was somewhat paralyzed as a researcher. Issues surrounding objectivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), particularly the notion that a researcher is able to obtain knowledge from an external world, as it exists independently of the research process, led me to question my underlying philosophies. By conducting ethnographic research within the institution I work, made me feel somewhat tangled in a world of meanings that caused me to wonder if I would really be able to produce a piece of realistic writing. Alongside this was the fact that there is a great need for increased sensitivity when conducting such research (Dimmock, 2000). I was concerned that

ethnography would look to my colleagues as me ‘hanging around’ in my institution and that morally in this context it may be unethical.

Much debate over the past fifty years has centered on how foreign social scientists present their writings about Japan. Beginning with Benedict’s (1946) book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, western social scientists examination of Japanese life and culture has come under much scrutiny. As the research is conducted in Japan by a British researcher, difficulties encountered with cross-cultural differences in interpreting and conducting this research should be acknowledged. I am considered an ‘outsider’ researcher. This has the potential to be problematic as it could be suggested that being an outsider, it may prove difficult to get beneath the skin (Lauder, 2000: p.466) of another culture and that subsequent communication across the cultures may be ‘loaded’ with subjectivity, personal perception, and experience (Dimmock, 2002 p.53). Dimmock (2002) suggests that to overcome such difficulties it is important to increase levels of cultural sensitivity and awareness. Discussions with colleagues revealed that there were two quite polarized schools of thought about me investigating the context of our institution through ethnography. Colleagues fell into one of two opinions, one was that I was seen as an objectivist, that my cultural background the fact that I wasn’t Japanese was not important. The second was that it did matter as issues of power were ultimately intertwined with my cultural background, which would shape and distort my findings. A number of papers have focused on ethnographic studies of Japanese educational contexts, such as those by Sato (2004) and Lewis (1995), who detailed elementary level education and Schoolland (1990) who approached the ‘Dark Side’ of higher education in the classroom. Yet, often, these ethnographic studies, written by non-Japanese, are written with a focus on classroom experiences and teaching that have arisen from the researcher’s initial personal experience as a teacher in the context in question and do not explore a wider academic situation. As Ohnuki-Tierney (1984:585) stated, western researchers are often given the ‘red carpet treatment’ in Japan and as such, the group being researched often ‘perform’ for the researcher and that the researchers presence becomes an important factor in how people react.

Case Study was considered to be the most suitable method for this study and as such, a reevaluation of the researcher's stance was necessary. Despite Shaughnessy et al (2000, p. 290) suggesting that case studies can lack a high degree of control, and that they may be impressionistic and biased, further reading of Willis (2007) and Merriam (1988) clearly indicated that case studies could also be utilized within an interpretive or social constructivist framework. Bassey (1999) could see its application within a positivist and interpretivist paradigm and Yin (2013) a post-positivist paradigm. In this case, the experience of the research inquiry is a process itself of interpreting the situation within the institution, and making sense of the phenomenon of accreditation being studied. The research is grounded in understanding organizational culture, change and management. Chaffee and Tierney (1988) highlighted how case studies can be used to better understand organizational culture. The 'bounded system' (Cresswell, 1998) this research focuses on is that of a higher education institution in Japan and daily contact with actors within this system (case) will lead to rich observations.

### **3.3. Case Study Research**

This section will review the literature on case study research and will conclude with how it will be used as a methodological framework in this study. Merriam (1998), Yin (2013) and Stake (2000, 2005, 2008) are key researchers associated with case study methodology. As can be seen in the previous section, I veered between utilizing a number of other methods; ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Hatch, 2000 and Patton, 1990) yet case study was selected as the most appropriate method. The following section will detail the reasons for this choice.

Yin (1984: p.14) stated that case study research can, 'contribute uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social and political phenomena' aligning well with the theoretical framework of organizational culture and change (Schein, 2004; Wheatley, 2007) which is clearly embedded in a constructivist paradigm. The depths that well constructed case study can reach, can provide a holistic understanding of very

complex situations, such as accreditation. For the purpose of this study, Bassey's (2000) prescriptive definition of a research case study will be used as a methodological framework (Box 3.3a).

### **Box. 3.3a – Definition of a Research Case Study**

An educational case study is an empirical enquiry that is:

conducted within a localized boundary of space and time into interesting aspects of an educational activity, program or institution, mainly in its natural context and with respect for persons. In order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners policy makers or of theoreticians who are working to these ends and such that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able:

- to explore significant features of the case
- to create plausible interpretations of what is found
- to test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations
- to construct a worthwhile argument or story
- to relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature
- to convey convincingly to an audience this argument or story
- to provide an audit trail by which other researches may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.

After recognizing that case study could fit my epistemological and ontological discussions, reading Adelman et al. (1980) further supported my assumption that there were numerous possible advantages to using a case study:

- Case study data are strong in reality;
- Case studies allow generalizations;
- Case studies recognize the complexities and embeddedness of social truths;
- Case studies may form an archive of descriptive material critically rich to admit to subsequent reinterpretation;
- Case studies are a 'step to action;'
- Case studies present research or evaluation data in a more publicly accessible form.

Case Study as defined by Stake (2005, p.443) is ‘an interest in the individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used.’ Through this definition, the situation is enclosed within a border, a boundary, which could be restrictive. This individuality could result in issues surrounding generalizability, which is problematic. This definition fails to adequately express the advantages of utilizing a case study and as the greatest challenge and primary goal of case study research is generalization is problematic. The nature of generalization takes the form of a single instance of the class of instances it represents (Bradley, 1993). Although we cannot generalize from the case in this study directly to other cases we can, however, generalize to theory. As will be seen in the discussion section, the findings will be presented in the context of the wider literature in this field, which then allows us to generalize to theory. If we consider the three major researchers in case study methodology to be Stake (2005), Merriam (1988) and Yin (1994) we could place them along a continuum, with Stake focusing on creative interpretation of the situation, Yin providing the detailed rigor and Merriam taking somewhat of the middle ground, through her exploratory, descriptive, interpretative and evaluative approach.

In this research, a case study approach was chosen because: a) a case study is thought to provide an approach that can support a deeper and more detailed exploration of how and why faculty react to accreditation and change; b) a case study is appropriate for investigating contemporary events (Yin, 1994) and an accreditation procedure is such a contemporary event in the life of a university; c) the case study design has been informed by the theory of Weick (2005) and Ericson (2002) and as this study aims to apply and add to these already established theories. the research is building theory; d) this case is also considered to be an embedded study, where a number of sub-items are investigated and brought together to form an overall picture of the institution and its members, again providing a richer account of the accreditation process.

A case study can provide a multi-perspective analyses. Through using this approach I can consider not just the voice and the perspective of the actors (faculty members) but also the groups of actors and the interactions between them.

Case studies are multi-perspectival analyses. This means that the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. Table 3.3b below highlights the main reasons why case study was chosen and an explanation of the rationale.

**Table 3.3b: Rationale for selecting a case study** (based on Yin, 1994; Stake, 2005; Merriam, 1988; Bradley, 1993).

Reason	Explanation
Case study supports the search for <i>Why</i> and <i>How</i>	This study is asking how faculty makes sense of the accreditation, why they think like they do and how they act.
Case study supports investigating contemporary events	In this study, the accreditation procedure lasts for a specific time period, it is time-sensitive and contemporary.
Case Studies have the potential to be generalized	This case provides an analytical generalisation in which a previously developed theories (Weick and Ericson) are used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study
Case studies can provide a multi-perspective of analysis	In this case, there are many actors and groups of actors. The study needs to consider their voice and the interaction between them.
Single-case studies can be useful for revelatory cases	It is rare for an observer to have such access to the accreditation procedure, therefore there is a high chance that revelatory information could be disclosed through case study

To conclude, after exploring various approaches, a case study approach was deemed the

most suitable for this study. The following section details the case study design and questions.

### **3.4. Case Study Design**

In this instance a singular case study has been used to represent a typical case since accreditation occurs in all private universities in Japan. As such, the study will examine the recommendations that are given by the accreditation association and how those recommendations are understood by faculty.

#### **3.4.1. Case Study Questions**

Case study questions in this study are ‘things that I continually tried to bear in mind’ during the research. They acted as points of reference particularly during observations and while examining documents. The following questions were formulated:

1. What are the aims of the institution?
2. What institutional knowledge does the university have?
3. Who is passing comment and what is their position within the institution?
4. What are people trying to say?

Question three is particularly important due to the hierarchical nature of Japanese society. It was important to always think *who* was talking to *whom* and what is their position within the institution and to each other.

Another issue to consider is that of language. The interviews were conducted in both English and Japanese. Having lived in Japan for over ten years I have developed proficiency in the Japanese language. Although I have never taken formal examinations, I work in Japanese on a daily basis (utilizing all four skills; reading, writing, speaking and listening) and also host a weekly radio show on a Japanese public broadcasting channel which I present entirely in the Japanese language. Therefore, I think this clarifies my ability and competence to conduct the research in my second language. There were

varying reasons for using either language. Some respondents felt more comfortable speaking in their native tongue as they were able to better articulate themselves; however, others stated that they felt less inhibited discussing their views in English as they didn't feel they had to hold anything back. What was unexpected was that many interviewees asked for a copy of the discussion questions prior to the interview in order to 'find' the answers before we met. I refused this and explained that there were no right or wrong answers and I hoped they could engage in an open discussion with me. I believe the reason for this was that the respondents didn't want to get caught off guard, or to be seen to 'lose face' if the answer was wrong. Some comments from the respondents included, 'I'm happy to discuss this but I need to study-up before we meet' and 'I won't be of any help as I don't know the right answers.' This was seen as a cultural issue and through discussion, respondents felt more at ease.

Yin (2013) has advised researchers to follow three principles: using multiple sources of evidence, i.e. triangulation; creating a case study database; and maintaining a chain of evidence. The next section will detail how these principles were incorporated and the logistics behind data collection.

### **3.5. Research Methods**

This section will describe and justify the research methods used in this study. It will begin by outlining the types of data collected before explaining how the data was analyzed.

#### **3.5.1. Observations**

Participant observation is essential to triangulate data in order to provide a richer description of the situation. A substantial amount of the documentary evidence in this study comes from observation notes taken since 2008 at faculty meetings, committee meetings and in informal 'chats' with colleagues. Collecting such data is a messy process. From 2008, notes were taken with the intent and purpose of conducting an

ethnographic study, however as mentioned in the previous section, case study methodology became a preferred methodology and as such this data has now become part of means of triangulating this data. providing useful chronological evidence to help explain the context of the study.

### **3.5.2. Interviews**

Patton (2002) details four types of interviews; verbal questionnaires, interviews, discussions and chats. In this study interviews are the chosen type. As many respondents are also colleagues, there is a large potential for bias. During the pilot interviews, it was clear that a discussion quickly moved into a chat, which resulted in the respondents also moving away from topic area. There was a tendency for respondents to focus on problems within the institution as opposed to specific thoughts on accreditation. Despite these being extremely interesting data, it was clearly becoming problematic to compare the findings of a whole set of discussions. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to reduce the possibility of interviewer bias and increase the comparability of interviewee response to enable a more simple and straightforward final analysis of the data. Again, this is another example of messiness in research that was only fully understood via a pilot interview. The research interview followed Kvale's criteria (1996, p. 145) for an 'ideal' interview:

- ✓ The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee;
- ✓ The shorter the interviewers answers and the longer the subjects answers the better;
- ✓ The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers;
- ✓ The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subject's answers in the course of the interview.

Pilot interviews were conducted and a number of issues became apparent. An initial

issue was that of language, i.e. Japanese or English, or a combination of both. A second and more interesting issue was keeping the respondents on topic. Although semi-structured, the interviews tended to take the course of a counseling session, whereby the respondent used the time as having someone listen to their problems not just problems associated with the institution, including unrelated personal problems, too. On the one hand, it was good to see that rapport and a feeling of trust had been developed by the researcher and respondent; however, due to time constraints it was necessary to learn techniques for reining in respondents when they began to go off-topic.

### 3.5.3. Documents collected

A substantial selection of documentary evidence was collected during the research. All of which cannot be included in the appendix due to the sheer volume of text, however documents that are deemed extremely significant to the study or documents that were referred to by respondents during the interviews can be found on the university homepage. The following table catalogues the documentary evidence that was collected and analyzed during the course of this research.

**Table 3.5.3 – Documents Collected**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. Monthly Reports by the university's internal Accreditation Committee	Reports delivered to faculty during monthly faculty meetings over the course of eighteen months
2. 大学評価 目次 University	A 276 page document detailing the purpose and vision of each section of the university

Statement of Purpose	
3. 認証評価 Summarized Final Result of Accreditation	A 10 page document which summarizes the result of the accreditation and areas for improvement
4. 序章 Official Response	A two page document which is the official response from the Chairman of the school
5. 大学評価	A 285 page document which is the official full report compiled by the university in conjunction with the JUAA
6. JUAA Publicity Materials	Materials given to faculty by the JUAA during an introductory explanation meeting at the beginning of the procedure.
7. Minute meetings	Minutes of various faculty and university meetings, which discuss items, associated with the accreditation procedure. Some of which are referred to by respondents.
8. Official Report 2010	The official 300 + page official document published to ratify the accreditation procedure. Made available to all stakeholders.

Documents 2,3,4,5 and 6 are all available for public viewing on the university homepage. Other documents included sketches given by respondents during interviews or informal chats, photos of whiteboard markings, when a whiteboard was used to explain a point during interviews and informal discussions and other PR related documents given out by the school that included the accreditation seal. The accreditation seal has been used in a variety of situations; on documents for entrance exams; school festival pamphlets; homecoming day materials; handouts given to high schools as part of the promotional package and an accreditation seal link on the university homepage, provides a direct link to the final document compiled by the university, which details everything the university

has achieved. It is seen as very much of a status symbol. All documents were kept in a selection of files and clearly referenced to ease cross-referencing during the interview and write up of the enquiry,

### **3.6. Research management**

This section will detail how data was managed, organized and analyzed. The large amount of data collected meant that a thorough system was necessary to track the documents. This process was done by hand using labeled files and boxes and in digital form creating files on computer hard drives and software such as Dropbox and iDisk. Every piece of data and section of writing was given a clear file name. All transcripts were labeled and stored in a secure environment.

#### **3.6.1. Research Sample and Access**

According to Spradley (1979), it is be recognized that in order to conduct a successful ethnographic interview, one should realize the importance of developing, initiating and maintaining a productive informant relationship this is also true for interviews in case study. The informants were chosen based on two sets of criteria; demographics of the sample and Spradley's (1979) five minimal requirements for locating a good informant.

In a country such as Japan where hierarchy is an innate part of many institutional systems, the representation of age and gender is crucially important in terms of forming a valid sample. Previous studies in sensemaking in higher education institutions have only focused on analyzing top-management (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), this study includes a wider number of stakeholders in order to add breadth and depth to the results and to increase the potential to generalize the results.

Patton's (1987) work on interviewing is also considered influential, at all times, I considered the purpose of the research and remembered to allow this to guide the interview process. The research suggests a number of ways to approach the interview.

Based on my work in the field of TESOL as an English Language Teacher I utilized my knowledge of intercultural communication and previous experience of conducting research interviews in this study. Initially, it was recognized that it is of paramount importance to build rapport with the interviewee. Knowledge of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), via a short course also allowed me to also utilize techniques of rapport building with the interviewee. For example, by mirroring body language and register rapport can be achieved. Secondly, active listening skills were utilized throughout, and I aimed to give positive reinforcements to interviewees throughout the process. All interviews were face-to-face and were often on soft chairs, or sat around a round table. No interviews were conducted over a desk or in what could be perceived as a power enhanced environment.

One important point was the modification of language with more senior interviewees. As has been stated before in this study, the use of honorifics in Japanese are of great importance, particularly in formal situations; therefore, care was taken to correctly address interviewees so as to create the right impression and to avoid getting off on the wrong foot. It was found however, that once the interviewed commenced, language use became more informal in both English and Japanese.

In March and April 2011, requests were sent to thirty-five full-time professors out of seventy working within the institution and three requests were sent to senior management. These thirty-five were selected based on the amount of time they had worked at the institution, faculty, management experience and position. A positive response was received from thirteen respondents with four refusing to give permission to be recorded, although these four did give permission to use discussions in the study. This was much lower than anticipated, and particularly disappointing was the non-response from the senior management team, despite support for the research.

**Table 3.6.1: Interview Sample**

Interview	Language	Recording Permission
(A) Male, 50+, non-Japanese, center employee, 3 years experience, contract	English	Yes
(B) Female, 50+, Japanese, Business Faculty, 20 years experience, head of student affairs, tenured	English	Yes
(C) Male, 40+, non-Japanese, center employee, 2 years experience, contract	English	Yes
(D) Female, 55+ Japanese, Business Faculty, 10 years experience, tenured	English	Yes
(E) Male, 60+ Japanese, Business Faculty, 10 years experience, former Dean, tenured	English	Yes
(F) Female, 50+, Japanese, Humanities Faculty, 15 years experience, former Center head, current head of academic affairs, tenured	English	Yes
(G) Male, 40+, Japanese, Business Faculty, 8 years experience, tenured	English	Yes
(H) Male, 60+, Japanese, Humanities Faculty, 20 years experience, former Dean, head of accreditation committee, tenured	English & Japanese	No
(I) Male, 50+ Japanese, Business Faculty, 10 years experience, current Dean of faculty, tenured	Japanese	No
(J) Male, 60+ Japanese, Business Faculty, 20 years experience, former head of student affairs, current head of recruitment, tenured	Japanese	Yes
(K) Female, 40+ Japanese, Business Faculty, 6 years experience, tenured	English	Yes (partial)

(L)Female, 50+ Japanese, Humanities Faculty, 20 years experience, tenured, former center head	English	No
(M) Female, 60+ Japanese Business Faculty, 20 years experience, tenured	English	No

Interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s office and *Soundnote* application recording software on the *iPad* was used to record the interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim including any code switching and were left for analysis in their original language; they were not translated.

### 3.6.2. Languages and Linguistic Elements

The term code switching is used in linguistics and other fields. Code switching is not only natural but also common among bilingual speakers. Yet, it is important to consider how and why people do it, particularly in a research interview situation as it can add a great deal more depth to the analysis, which is why texts were analyzed as they were produced on the day. The term ‘footing’ (Goffman, 1981) describes interaction in the same vein as code switching yet where code switching is a change from one language to the other, footing is the stance that the individual takes within the interaction. For example, an individual can occupy a number of different roles within the interaction, which was seen in the interviews. Gumperz (1982) goes further to discuss code switching and contextualization. He describes how, when language is altered during an exchange, it may provide a way for speakers to indicate to their interlocutor how their utterances should be interpreted. In a sense they provide extra information and give a greater opportunity to read between the lines. Another issue associated with code switching is that of identity. Heller’s (1988) work in Canada illustrates the use of code switching as a political strategy. During the research, a number of the respondents changed languages when they wanted to say something ‘off record’ or when they wanted to emphasize a particular point. This fits with Heller’s (1988a, 1988b) discussion that, the use of multiple languages ‘permits people to say and do, indeed *be* two or more things

where normally a choice is expected' (Heller, 1988, 3).

### **3.6.3. Schedule**

Table 3.6.3 details the research schedule. Initial accreditation procedures at the institution in question began in 2008 and the accreditation process was officially held in the academic year between April 2009 and April 2011. During that time, the JUAA collected documents, interviewed professional staff, faculty and students, and produced numerous reports about the institution. Throughout the process, recommendations were made and new internal policies were created and gradually implemented. It is these 'changes' and reactions to these changes that are under investigation in this study. Documents and field notes were collected from September 2008 in order to provide a holistic picture of the entire accreditation procedure. The accreditation officially finished with feedback and further recommendations in April 2011.

Document Collection began in September 2008 and included all information given to faculty during the accreditation explanation sessions and at subsequent faculty meetings. Pilot interviews were due to be conducted in March 2011, however, due to the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan, these were delayed to the beginning of April. Analysis of the pilot interviews took place immediately and interviews took place between the end of April and July. The reason for the immediacy of the interviews was that the accreditation was finalized and thus it was deemed the most appropriate time for reflection.

**Table 3.6.3: Research Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
September 2008	Initial explanation session for all faculty and administration staff
September 2008 ~ April 2011	Document collection began (handouts from explanation session, research diary, meeting minutes) Attendance at meetings Informal chats
March 2011	Letters sent to possible respondents
April 2011	Letters sent again to possible respondents (as previous letter had been sent just before the earthquake in March 2011)
April 2011	Pilot Interviews
April 2011-July 2011	Interviews
July 2011	Second request to senior management for interviews was sent out
June-August 2011	Transcribing data, coding, analysis,

### **3.7. Ethics**

When embarking on this research, informed consent, ‘the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would likely influence their decision’ (Diener and Crandall, 1978), was of paramount

importance. In this study, the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1971) guidelines for reasonably informed consent were followed:

- ✓ A fair explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purpose
- ✓ A description of the attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be expected.
- ✓ A description of the benefits reasonably to be expected.
- ✓ A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the participants.
- ✓ An offer to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures.
- ✓ An instruction that the person is free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice.

These guidelines were selected as many colleagues and respondents were educated in the USA, where they obtained higher degrees. They were familiar with these guidelines and in the interests of the respondents' comfortableness, I followed these guidelines. Being a participant observer has its roots in sociological and anthropological studies.

Researching as a participant observer I am able to learn more about the institution through exposure to and or involvement in the day-to-day routine activities of participants in the setting (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999:91). I felt that this approach enabled me to develop a more holistic understanding of the institution (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002) that can increase validity. In this study I have been sure to avoid selecting informants who are similar to myself or those whom I am particularly close to in a social context. I was aware of and understood how my gender, ethnicity, class and theoretical approach may affect the collection and interpretation of the data. I was aware of the amount of deception and impression management that needed to be employed during some stages of the research. I also acknowledged that the faculty members of this institution have accepted me not only as a colleague but also as a researcher. I have always spent a great deal of time determining to what extent I should participate in particular meetings and or situations in the workplace so as not to bias my research. I also felt it more appropriate to work with and test a previous framework as opposed to taking a grounded theory approach that I believe would have been greatly biased by my

position as a participant observer. In taking this stance I am a member of the group and the group is aware of my position as a researcher. Yet, I do not feel that it has significantly had an impact upon the depth of data that has been revealed by the informants. In honesty, the greatest problem I have met with by taking a participant observer stance is that of the mental stresses that I endured in initially trying to find a work/life/research balance. Essentially, ensuring that I participated in the research but not to the extent that I was so absorbed in the context that I could not analyze what was happening. The process of conducting research for an EdD is an exhaustive process. Being able to ‘switch off’ after work in order to write up research and research diaries, was problematic for me. It was, as Merriam (1998:103) describes a ‘schizophrenic activity.’

### **3.8. Guidelines for Informed Consent**

The main participants in this research were colleagues working at the university in question. They were all full-time employees at the private university, the majority was tenured, and two were full-time adjunct faculty. All except two interviewees are Japanese. One is American and one is Canadian. Consent was obtained from the university administration and dean of the faculty who also agreed to an interview and an explanation of the research were presented at an internal research committee. Each interviewer was asked to sign a participation consent and anonymity paper in both English and Japanese (an example of which can be found in the Appendix). They were informed that at any time the interview could be suspended or terminated. Each transcript was available for the interviewer to view and make comment on and recordings of the interview were also made available to each participant.

During the research, the issue of deception was always at the forefront of my mind and was the primary reason for the change in methods from ethnography to case study. The research was presented to colleagues as an opportunity to uncover the strengths and weaknesses in our institution, and wider field of higher education in Japan as a result of the accreditation process. My colleagues agreed that the research would be of use to all

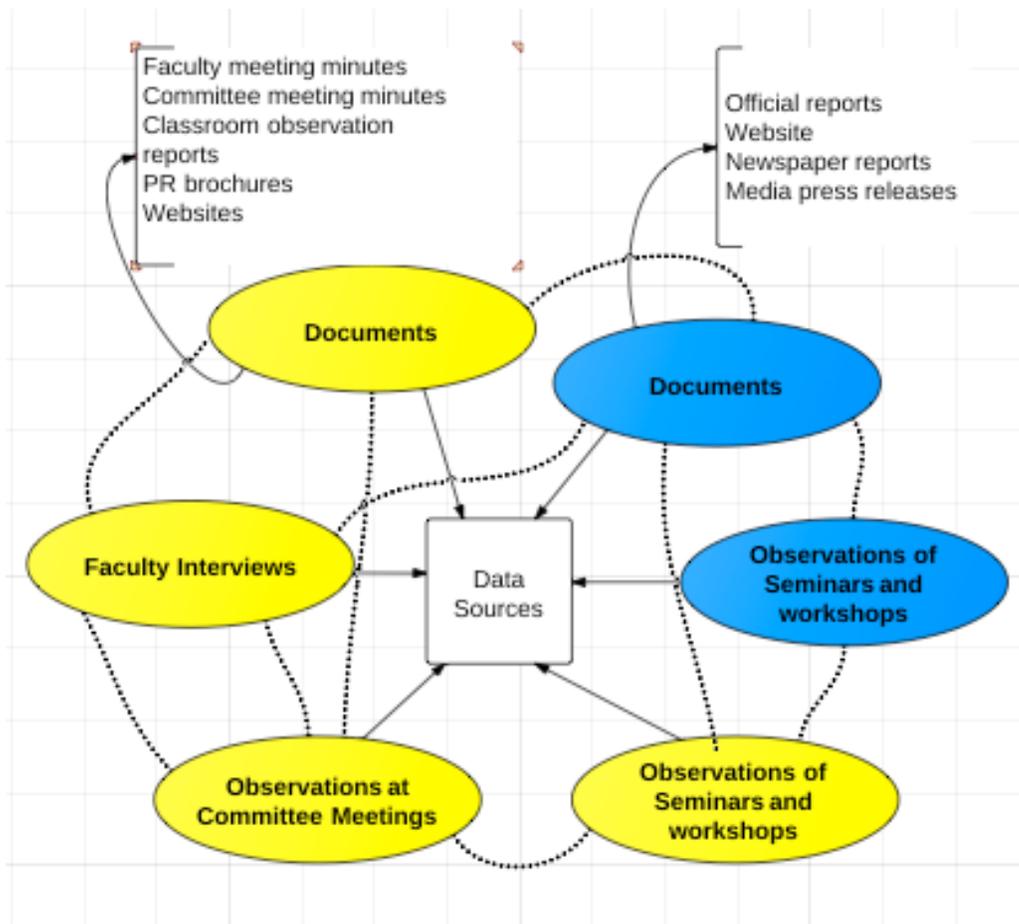
stakeholders and that it had the potential to improve communications. Being so closely connected with the subjects on a daily basis could have inevitably caused a great amount of psychological discomfort, as I might have been unable to remove myself from the situation. It could be suggested that the respondents could have felt some discomfort, but having established rapport with them it is believed that could dispel any such feelings of anxiety or discomfort. At the end of this research project, it has been agreed with faculty that a presentation will be arranged to share the findings. At the end of each interview, participants were also given a small gift to show appreciation. This is something which is customary in Japan. It is also likely that sometime in the future, respondents may expect me to give up some time to assist them in some duties in exchange for their time.

Throughout the study and during presentations on this research, a pseudonym has been given to the institution and all subjects involved. One computer was used for data collection and two other computers, one desktop and one laptop, were used for writing and data analysis. It was ensured that that all computers used during this process were at no time connected to the university network to avoid the risk of school IT administrators being able to access the data.

The issue of validity and accuracy in ethnographic and naturalistic inquiry is contentious (Hammersley, 1992, Maxwell, 1992, LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As ethnographic inquiry examines a situation over time, the influence of history is already accounted for and thus internal validity could be achieved. In this study, I followed Lincoln and Guber's (1985:219, 301) suggestions of how credibility can be addressed. Although the research is now based on case study, these suggestions are still relevant and have been adhered to. The *prolonged engagement* in the field helps to ascertain the validity and accuracy of describing the case study. Secondly, due to my position within the institution, I was already engaged in *persistent observation*. In terms of triangulation, Denzin and Lincon (1994) detail four types of triangulation; data triangulation; investigator triangulation: theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. Peer debriefing was also carried out in order to test the honesty of my informants and member checking was carried out on unclear issues in order to correct

factual or linguistic errors. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) also argue for tactical authenticity, and this is something that has already discussed with senior management at the institution in question. We arrived at a joint understanding that the research should bring benefit to all those involved in the institution.. This was a personal pre-requisite for embarking on the study. As Yin (2013) stated, case studies need multiple sources to be adequately triangulated. Figure. 3.8 below explains the data source triangulation for this case study. Of most concern to the researcher throughout this study was maintaining an objective view of ‘who’ produced the documents. Who made the documents and about whom? In the figure below documents produced internally (i.e. they were written by faculty of administrators of the university) are in yellow while those produced externally (by outside bodies or the JUAA) are in blue.

**Figure 3.8: Data Source Triangulation**



### **3.9. Data Interrogation**

A full description of the data analysis process can be found in Chapter 4, however, the following paragraph describes how I interrogated the data. Initially, I identified patterns through the continuous revision of coding frames and coding of transcripts and documents. The constant comparative method was used to form coherence between seemingly disparate comments in the data sources. This was a way to confirm the concepts that might emerge and the concepts from the literature with supporting data. It was hoped that the continual reading and annotating of the data sources would help me to define units of data that could be further explored; producing a thick description of change and accreditation. This process allowed me to make more sense of what was going on in the institution and how sense was being made by the faculty members. The conceptual models of Weick and Ericson, from the theoretical frameworks identified in the literature review and used during coding, were applied to gain a deeper understanding of the research issue.

### **3.10. Emotions and Tragedy**

A note must be made of the potential impact the Tohoku Earthquake in March 2011 may have had on respondents and myself. The earthquake, subsequent tsunami and radiation fears have undoubtedly changed Japan. The university in question suffered significant damage during the quake on both campuses. Student deaths, as a result of the tsunami and earthquake, were reported and as such, the start of the new academic year was suspended by two weeks. Some members of faculty experienced significant damage to their homes rendering them uninhabitable and others were without lifelines (electricity, gas, water) for as long as three months.

Although no questions were specifically related to the disaster, it is inevitable that after such trauma, people's way of thinking may have been affected. Carr (1989) describes two psychological consequences of disasters; threat effects (which occur immediately

after the event) and disruption effects (which occur in the long-term after the event). Even if an individual has not directly experienced the trauma, repeated viewing of the event, such as on television, discussion in the media or with colleagues, can result in something termed vicarious traumatization (Thomas & Ramones, 1996). As such, it is reasonable to assume that interviewees during this study may have experienced such trauma resulting in a new way of looking at life, or a new philosophy about the institution based on the fallout from the disaster.

# Chapter 4

## Case Study Reporting and Data Analysis

### 4.1. Introduction

In this section the method of reporting the case study and data analysis is explained as a precursor to the case itself. The section will begin by discussing the ways of reporting a case study in both education and management studies before detailing analysis procedures.

### 4.2. Case Study Reporting & Data Analysis

There is a great need to carefully consider the reporting style when conducting a case study. This study spans business and education and as such, research in the business field should also be considered as it shares the same foundations as research in education. The reporting of this case study takes the form of an ethnographic text as it is designed to give readers the *reality* of the situation described and should increase the plausibility of my explanations. Van Maanen (1988) distinguishes between three types of ethnographic writing; realist tales, confessional tales and impressionist tales. See Table 4.2 for further explanation of each type of tale. A narrative will be provided where the researcher will not be seen and the personal subjectivity of the researcher is suppressed. This section will comprise extensive quotations from the interviews, documents and informal chats conducted during the study, as these will provide evidence to support points made.

**Table 4.2. – Ethnographic writing**

Realist Tales	Definitive, confident, dispassionate, written in the third person, describe the culture of the organization, the members and their behaviour
Confessional Tales	Personalized accounts where the researcher is fully-implicated in the data collection
Impressionist Tales	Emphasis on words, metaphors and phrases, dramatic events and stories

It is important to clarify, what is considered a theme in this research. Identifying themes in qualitative research is a fundamental, yet at times, an extremely complex task. They often come from reviewing literature. They exemplify the characteristics of what is being studied and to a great extent they come from the researcher's values, and theoretical orientation (Bulmer 1979; Strauss 1987; Maxwell, 1986). In order to identify themes in the data the following techniques were utilized when examining the documents collected and transcripts:

- ✓ Word frequencies
- ✓ Key words in context
- ✓ Comparing and contrasting (Bogdan and Bicklan, 1982:153)
- ✓ Working as a social scientist (Bogdan and Bicklan, 1982:156-162)
- ✓ Abbreviating – looking for information which isn't in the text as suggested by Spradley (1979)
- ✓ Use of metaphors, similes and analogies in both English and Japanese (D'Andrade, 1995; Strauss and Quinn, 1997)
- ✓ Paving, cutting and sorting – utilizing different colour highlighter pens (Sandelowski, 1995:373)

A prominent aspect of the data analysis in this study was that with the exception of one

Japanese interview, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher and excerpts displayed in three locations in a secluded corner of my office at work (which only I have the key for), and on the walls of my two apartments. This enabled me to engage in the ocular scan method (Bernard, 2000). Initially, the pilot data were analyzed, the initial themes were discovered and coded setting the precedent for further review. The whole procedure was done manually. An explanation for this can be found in the following sections.

#### **4.2.1. Computer Data Analysis**

Although technology can now provide a great amount of support for qualitative data analysis (see a summary in Table 4.2.1), it was decided early on in the process that software such as ANOVA, etc would not be used.

**Table 4.2.1: Summary of CAQDAS Software**

Name of program	Summary
Timeline, Word Processing and Database software	Examples such as Mac Summary, outliners such as Symantec, and basic packages such as Works, Word, etc.
The Ethnograph	Allows the identification and retrieval of text from documents.
HyperQual	Specifically for the analysis of text data from interviews, observations and documents.
HyperResearch	Allows text, audio and visual materials.
HyperSoft	Filing, indexing, searching, annotating, mapping and coding data.
NUDIST	Flagging and text search, creates hierarchical databases.
QUALPRO	Similar to Ethnograph, basic cut and paste functions.
QUALOG	Utilizes the 'induction process' (Dewey), relationships pre-built in.
Textbase Alpha	Can code narrative texts, frequency of words, etc.
SONAR	Text retrieval and coding, instant index.
Atlas-ti	Emphasis on inter-code relationships and theory building, rather than code and receive. Interface similar to SPSS.
NVivo	Code and retrieve, text revival, relational networks.

The reasons for this were threefold. Firstly, logistics were a concern. During the analysis, I would be traveling around the world on different work-related assignments and as such

having the software installed on multiple computers would be financially unfeasible and the saving of data would be problematic and confusing. In addition, due to the sensitive nature of the enquiry, keeping personal information on a limited number of computers was considered more appropriate.

Secondly, due to the multiple languages used in the study, English and Japanese, it was felt that software was not yet sophisticated enough to cope with both languages in the same text. An analysis of the text, as it was produced by the subject (with code-switching included), is of paramount importance, and software cannot yet support this. The code-switching is critical linguistically and as Fowler and Kress state, using any tool which lifts the discourse out of its original context 'would be the very antithesis' of a constructivist approach (1979, p189).

Finally, and most importantly was my emotional rejection of CAQDAS. From my point of view, the beauty of qualitative research is the researchers relationship to data; the interpretative nature of case study required the researcher to gain an in-depth relationship with the data. In order to fulfill the idea of obtaining a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the situation, similar to ethnography, building a relationship with the data and becoming emerged in it through manual coding helped to do this. It was felt that using a computer would put a distance between the material and myself and consequently as such, the physical link to the data would be lost. This is a problem of decontextualization, where the overall holistic picture could be lost. Fielding and Lee (1998) also note rejection of such analysis, but contrast the detailed focus you can give a screen full of text with the more open visual image of the data on paper that can wash over you-big picture and small picture orientations to the text. I also feel that qualitative studies are very much about what is not being said/seen in the data, thus a computer, which produces what is explicitly there, may detract attention for searching for what is not there. Another fear is that while still being a novice researcher, it would be easy to fall in to the trap of aligning myself with the conventions that are built into the computer program, limiting development of my skills as a researcher within this long-held research tradition. There is a fear of being 'pushed' towards a particular answer or method of

analysis, which has the potential to ‘steer the analysis from the task of analysis’ (MacMilan, 2005).

### **4.3. Coding Procedure**

Based on the discussion above and in Chapter 3.9, the first step of analysis was to develop codes from the theoretical concepts of Weick and Ericson and from the literature on change and quality assurance. This would show how the framework was applied and exemplified. Table 4.3a below shows the matching between theoretical concepts and the codes from the literature. During the pilot, it became apparent that data-led codes would be useful and so these were inductively derived from the raw data. Table 4.3b shows an example of how the pilot interviews were coded. After initial coding, nodes were assigned and a large-scale dendrogram sketch of the coding procedures was created. The whole process of creating a dendrogram was done on a large wall with different coloured sticky post-it notes to represent the codes, marker pens to show the nodes and identify core categories that were deemed to have the greatest explanatory potential.

**Table 4.3.a: Codes from Theoretical Concepts and Literature**

<b>Codes from Weick's Theoretical Concepts</b>
identity environment communication plausibility accuracy cues ambiguity uncertainty expectations decision making emotions reality change goals experience belief stories priority rationale events/occasions authority motivation coping perception organization problem values symbols metaphor leadership management
<b>Codes from Ericson's Theoretical Framework</b>
homogenous thinking heterogeneous thinking communication channels decision making conceptual collective thinking meaning management morale leadership team strategy process structure symbols change implementation professionalism stress emotion collaborative network
<b>Codes from Literature on QA and Japan</b>
homogenous heterogeneous expectations risk behavior duty/ <i>gimu</i> accreditation teams group individuals identity politics hierarchy external internal accreditation QA culture <i>nihonjinron tate-mae</i> purpose teaching research administration leadership change-capable east v west evidence-based standards priorities responsibilities collaborative network self-discovery <i>Kaizen</i> institutional culture

**Table 4.3b: Example of Coding in Pilot Interviews**

Evidence from Pilot Interviews	Codes
<i>Each section was in charge of answering the questions so you don't know what answer was given by other sections.</i>	responsibility, knowledge-sharing, roles, group, team, ambiguity
<i>Why aren't senior professors mentoring us? Because of the accreditation, I'm supposed to review every year what we have done.</i>	duty/ <i>gimu</i> , expectations, uncertainty, perception, accreditation, leadership, <i>Kaizen</i> , institutional culture
<i>I get that through collaborating we create this sort of positive field and it's a situation where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.</i>	collaboration, teamwork, morale, perception, emotion, purpose
<i>I don't get to choose the textbook.</i>	decision-making, role, authority, management, politics, responsibilities
<i>There is a lack of vision from the leaders.</i>	management, leadership, perception, plausibility, accuracy, cue, strategy, administration, change capable, institutional culture
<i>Nothing is concrete so I wonder, 'what is the point?'</i> <i>It's just a zone of positivity in an area of a lot of negativity here.</i>	morale, environment, emotions, goals, experience, motivation, coping, perception, metaphor, stress, self-discovery
<i>You've got a tight group and we are united we can really focus on the students. Everyone contributed.</i>	collaborative network, group, team, goals, experience, structure, values, morale

<i>It's like a tate-mae thing (outside versus inside).</i>	tate-mae, institutional culture, nihonjinron, internal, external, knowledge sharing
<i>Everyone has the same mindset one way or another and it's really creating a wonderful working environment.</i>	collaborative network, group, team, goals, experience, structure, values, morale
<i>We have a workshop at a conference but if you do research you are going to rock the boat.</i>	research, environment, plausibility, perception, expectations, goals, priority, events, motivation, perception, knowledge sharing, professionalism, collaborative network
<i>I feel stupid I have stayed here this long.</i>	stress, identity, plausibility, emotions, coping, perception, professionalism, expectations
<i>Nobody wants to change here.</i>	change, homogenous thinking, collective, perspective, institutional culture, <i>Kaizen</i> , network
<i>There is a lack of understanding about what is really going on here, we don't get any information. What is accreditation?</i>	communication, plausibility, cues, ambiguity, perception, communication channels, collective thinking, group, QA, institutional culture

The categories in the discussion in Chapter 6 were derived from the process of analyzing the codes, nodes and categories outlined above.

#### **4.4. Summary**

Case study methodology was applied in the hope that it would provide sufficient scaffolding to better understanding how accreditation and change affects private universities, people and institutions of higher education in Japan. The case study attempts to contribute to theoretical ideas about institutional change and accreditation procedures in Japanese higher education. The themes selected also tie in with the seven properties of sensemaking and thus a thorough discussion of the how employees make sense of the phenomenon of accreditation and change can be explored. The following section will now introduce the case university. I have purposely waited until this point in the enquiry to introduce the case as I feel a thorough understanding of the issues and research surrounding both accreditations in general and change is vital in order to better understand the case in question. Chapter 5 will present the characteristics and context of the case university and clearly outline the accreditation procedures used by the Japan University Accreditation Association.

# Chapter 5

## The Case Study

### 5.1. Context

This section will discuss the case institution beginning with general contextual information, followed by the theoretical perspective of the institution and a description of the accreditation procedure. The characteristics of organizations change over time. This section will outline the main characteristics of the HE institution at the heart of this case study and specific details about the history of the institution will also be explained. Table 5.1 highlights the emerging organizational characteristics of the 21st century corporation (Wind and Main, 1998, p.4). As was outlined in the literature review, some HE institutions exhibit characteristics of being run like corporations. This table is a useful way to describe the characteristics of the case-study university in these terms. The words in bold highlight the characteristics that can be seen in the institution in this case study.

The university is what could be considered as a typical example of a small-sized, regional, private university – a type that is under increasing pressure in the light of the declining birthrate and rapidly aging population in Japan. The university is split over two campuses, one in downtown Tokyo which is home to 3rd and 4th year students, and the other in rural Chiba Prefecture which is home to 1st and 2nd year students. The rationale for the split campus is that lower grades can enjoy a rural community atmosphere around campus that supports the schools' liberal arts approach to education while the city campus allows the students to be perfectly positioned to engage in job-hunting

**Table 5.1: The emerging organizational characteristics of the 21st century corporation (Wind and Maine, 1998:4).**

<b>Traditional Characteristics</b>	<b>Emerging Characteristics</b>
Goal directed	<b>Vision directed</b>
<b>Price focused</b>	Value focused
<b>Product quality mindset</b>	Total quality mindset
Product driven	<b>Customer driven</b>
Shareholder focused	<i><b>Stakeholder focused</b></i>
<b>Finance Orientated</b>	Speed orientated
<b>Efficient</b>	Innovative
<b>Hierarchical</b>	Flat
<b>Functional</b>	Cross-functional
<b>Rigid</b>	Flexible
<b>Domestic</b>	Global
<b>Vertically integrated</b>	Networked

The campuses are approximately one hour apart by rapid train. There are 162 faculty members (including full-time and part-time) with 2,726 students enrolled. The case university was founded as a women’s dental college in 1926. Established by a family who had both land and significant finances, it was and continues to be, a family-run business. The appendix illustrates the development of the university from a small dental college to full four-year university with a graduate school. The management and leadership structure reflects that of a private company. The previous three chairmen of the board (*rijicho*) have followed the family hereditary line. All three have had backgrounds outside of education and took up the post of Chairman after retirement from their previous employment.

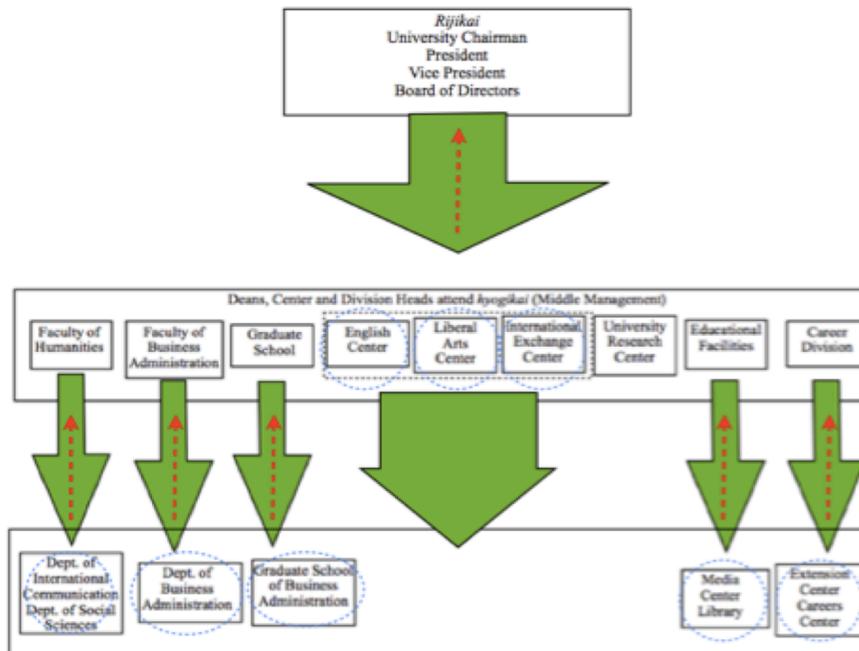
Amid the changing times in 1950, the owners came to believe that foreign language education was indispensable for enhancing the social status of women and for preparing the nation for a rapid move towards internationalization. As such, the university began to grow and developed a Faculty of Humanities and a second campus in rural Chiba prefecture in 1950. In 1992, following the general trend in Japan towards the closure of small two-year junior colleges to four year coeducational universities, the case-study university followed suit and opened a department focusing on the development of international awareness. A further stage of growth saw the opening of the Faculty of Business Administration in 2002 and the Graduate School of Business Administration in 2007 (See Appendix). The co-educational university now enrolls over 2,500 students and emphasizes a liberal arts program, which sets out to provide students with the ‘intellectual and human training necessary to live in the dynamically changing world’ (direct quote from university homepage).

Structure can refer to the formal pattern of relationships between people in organization and it expresses the ways in which individuals relate to each other in order to achieve organizational objectives. The following section will discuss the structure of the case institution. The administrative structure is such that the university is run by the *hyogikai*. The *hyogikai* functions in the same way as a board of trustees. The board consists of approximately fifteen members from outside the university, including previous employees of the university and retired professionals from a variety of fields. Administrative meetings are held once a month and are chaired by the current university Chairman. It is at this meeting where decisions are made and financial details are discussed. The second-tier of management meeting is the *rijikai*. The *rijikai* is the Chairman’s internal administration committee. Members of this committee include the dean of each faculty, the head of each research center and senior bureaucrats within the institution. This meeting is also held once a month. The next level of administration is the *kyojukai*. The *kyojukai* is the monthly meeting held by each faculty. Here decisions regarding individual students are made and suggestions for changes, new courses, faculties, etc are prepared and subsequently delivered to the *rijikai*. Finally, within each faculty, there are smaller committees that run student services, research centers, facilities,

etc. Each member of faculty is expected to be a member of between three and five committees (depending on their rank and experience). These meetings are also held once a month and the results of these smaller committee meetings are delivered to the *kyojukai*.

Any major change to the running of the university must be passed by the board of trustees. However, the ultimate decision on such matters still lies with the Chairman. As such, changes by the faculty at faculty level are extremely difficult to implement. The directives from the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) would have been delivered to the *hyogikai*, via the *rijikai* and finally delivered to the general faculty at each faculty *kyojukai*.

**Figure 5.1: The Structure of the University – flow of decision-making and recommendations**



Green arrows indicate the direction of decision-making pattern that occurs. Decisions are made by *rijikai*, communicated to *hyogikai*. Suggestions may come from departments and divisions, through smaller committees (blue circles) and are taken to the *hyogikai* by division heads and deans. Red arrows indicate the movement of suggestions and recommendations. What is problematic is that there are three centers; the English Center, Liberal Arts Center and the International Exchange Center that report decisions directly to the departments, they are central powerhouses of the university, yet do not hold a faculty meeting (*kyojukai*). Whereas the departments can make suggestions to their faculty, the departments cannot make suggestions direct to the centers. Thus giving the centers substantial power over the faculty. This could result in difficulties in communication along with managerial power imbalances. It is also very clear to see this is a top-down management structure. At no time do departments or faculties have autonomous powers. The next section will explore the theoretical perspectives of the institution and relates to the discussion in Chapter Two on internationalization.

## **5.2. Theoretical Perspective of the Institution**

The rhetoric of internationalization is to be found in the documentation of almost every university in Japan and is one of the cornerstone missions of the case university. In order to ‘*internationalize*’ universities need to be able to keep up with global rankings and must work to not just national standards but also global standards. Japan, in an era of neo-liberal globalism, is a country with a rapidly declining birthrate and ageing society. The government is continually enacting policies to address these concerns; yet, it is clear there are discrepancies between government policy and initiatives and institutional policy and practice. As was found in previous research as part of the EdD by the researcher, internationalization in higher education in Japan is driven by government rhetoric and market economics. Through examining the literature, and utilizing Knight’s rationales as a lens to examine the historical context of Japan and internationalization, it is suggested that Japan has taken a rather piecemeal and reluctant approach to internationalization, as it has pragmatically taken what elements are necessary from outside to avoid threatening Japanese identity - which could be described as a cautious form of pragmatism. Lincione

stated in 1993, that the *kokusaika* movement in Japan has ‘become enmeshed in an ideological and political struggle over the aims, content and control of education’ (1993:123). The internationalization of the institution is now benchmarked by accreditation standards. In achieving accreditation, the institution can, potentially improve, thus moving up the global university rankings, consequently recruiting a higher caliber of students from both within Japan and internationally. Not only is there a clear division between private and public universities in this process, but also, as Eades (2005) suggests, there are also two types of academic cultures that co-exist in Japanese HE. One culture can be likened to how academia is viewed in western counties, with ‘world class’ institutions engaging in internationally recognized research, while the second culture is a more localized culture that does not join the ranks of the ‘world class’ universities. These dualities lead us to further question what role third party accreditation agencies such as JUAA play in defining HE. The JUAA explicitly state that they are ‘making serious efforts towards establishing accreditation procedures that are acceptable to the international community’ (JUAA, 2011). They also signed a declaration to provide ‘Quality assurance of internationally viable higher education’ (JUAA, 2011) (See Appendix). The university in this study clearly wants to achieve recognition of being a world-class, internationalized institution. On the university homepage, the chairman explains his vision for the university (See Box. 5.2)

### **Box. 5.2: Chairman’s Message**

Founded in 1926, the Case University has a history of more than 80 years in higher education based in Tokyo, Japan. This co-educational university now enrolls 2,600 students and emphasizes liberal arts programs, which provide the intellectual and human training necessary to live in the dynamically changing world.

The Case University has also been recognized as a university with a strong focus on language education, as globalization necessitates greater international communication skills. We encourage students to travel and study abroad so they can gain exposure to diverse cultures. Based on such experience, we hope our young men and women will some day contribute to the cause of enhancing brotherhood among all people.

The university also has three clear missions:

1. 現代の変化に応える大学
2. 国際人を育てる大学
3. 面倒見のよい大学

1. *To be a university which responds to the rapidly changing environment.*
2. *To be a university which fosters international-minded people*
3. *To be a university that takes exemplary pastoral care of its students.*

This overall mission of the university has an affective component in that it helps to motivate people to gain commitment. It has a telling technique. It is cognitive in that it shows *how* to achieve the goals (through support - *mendomi*), and affective in that it explicitly states what kind of people it expects to create (international people - *kokusaijin*). It fits Deetz, Tracy and Simpson's (1995:53-57) characteristics of the Telling Vision Technique when a CEO creates the vision of the institution and gives it to the staff. However, the university requires recognition from the JUAA in order to show the wider public and all stakeholders that it is fulfilling its aims.

Attention should be brought here to mission number three: 面倒見のよい大学 (*mendomi no yoi daigaku*) as it is a mission that permeates documents and rhetoric at the case institution. Literally translated, *mendomi* means taking care of people; being considerate of someone's needs. In other words the university mission is to take care of their students. Faculty reactions to these mission statements can be seen in the results and discussion section therefore it was important to clarify the meaning of any ambiguous or Japanese words in this section. The following section explains the Japan University Accreditation Association procedures that were the impetus for change at the case university.

### 5.3. The JUAA Accreditation Procedure

The accreditation of universities through the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) takes place every seven years. In Japanese, the word accreditation is *ninsho*, yet to a non-Japanese, this word is very vague as it is a very broad term. It could be said to have two meanings: 1) to certify that something reaches a pre-defined standard, 2) to confirm that systems are running as they should be. This section will detail the accreditation procedure that occurred at the case study institution and will table the results of the accreditation. The following section will highlight the major areas of change that occurred at the institution as a result of the accreditation. Table 5.3 details the selection of sources that support the claims in this section about the JUAA. Some sources are publicly available and are common knowledge among academics in Japan (indicated by \* in the table), while others are in internal documents received by faculty in Japan (indicated by \*\* in the table). The information below is an amalgamation of all these sources; they were cross-referenced to ensure the information was correct.

**Table 5.3a – Sources of information about the JUA**

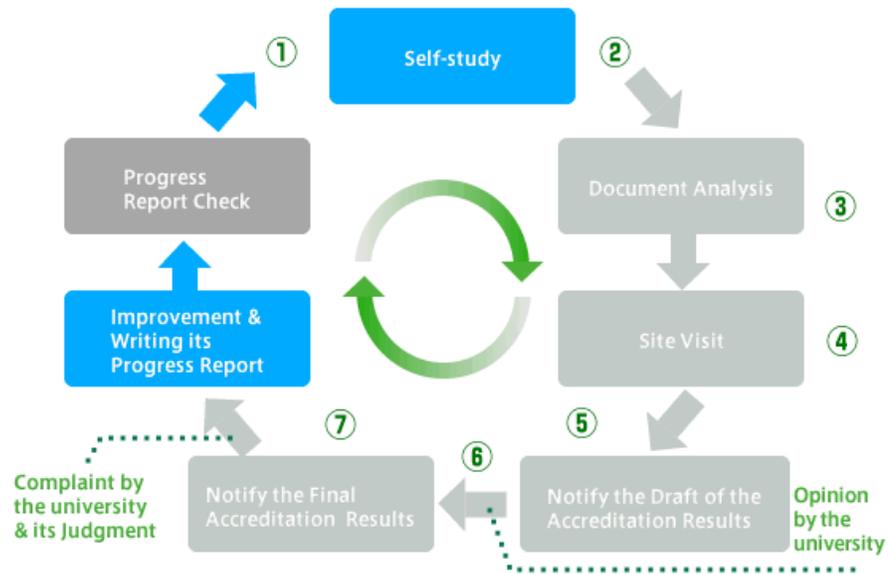
Source	Description	
JUA Official Homepage	<a href="http://www.jua.or.jp/index.html">http://www.jua.or.jp/index.html</a>  Publicly accessible website with general information and overview.	*
Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT)	University Evaluation Homepage  <a href="http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/kokuritu/">http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/kokuritu/</a>	*
大学評価を読む (JUA選書) University Accreditation - A reader	Guidebook - available to the public but copies were also given to faculty of case institution.	*
大学評価情報ポータル University Evaluation Information Portal	Website dedicated to explaining all aspects of university quality assurance in Japan; procedures, rankings and data  <a href="http://portal.niad.ac.jp/index.html">http://portal.niad.ac.jp/index.html</a>	*
日本私立大学協会 Association of Private Universities in Japan	A portal site for all information concerning the running of Private Universities in Japan  <a href="http://www.shidaikyo.or.jp/riihe/research/arcadia/0263.html">http://www.shidaikyo.or.jp/riihe/research/arcadia/0263.html</a>	* *
自己評価書き方 How to write a Self Evaluation	Internal documents received by faculty with advice on completing sections of the accreditation documents	* *

じゅあ JUAA Newsletter	A newsletter delivered to university professors with information about the accreditation, reports by professors and administrators going through the process and advice and suggestions on completing the procedure	* *
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The JUAA is run by a board of trustees and a board of councilors. There is a team of over 200 employees constantly engaged in accrediting universities. Directly under the command of the board are three committees: the university accreditation committee, the appeal committee and the accreditation planning committee. Each of these committees are directly involved with the university that is under the accreditation procedure. Directly under the control of the university accreditation committee are two university review sub-committees whose job it is to review all the documentation exchanges submitted between the university and the JUAA. There is also the financial affairs review sub-committee, which, due to the dual structure of higher education in Japan, is split into two panels, one for national/public universities and one for private universities. Also under the control of the accreditation committee is a progress report review sub-committee that is responsible for following up on the progress of the institutions after the accreditation procedure. There is a re-review sub-committee that is responsible for following up and reviewing universities that have failed some part of the accreditation, and who need to resubmit documentation for re-review and finally the supplementary review committee. All these committees work together to ensure that the universities that come through the procedure are thoroughly analyzed (a diagrammatic representation of this structure can be found in the appendix).

The JUAA process of accreditation focuses on, 1) the internal quality assurance systems of the institution and its effectiveness; 2) self-improvement activities; 3) basic evaluation and achievement evaluation; 4) continuous improvement and 5) peer reviews. The entire process can be seen in Figure 5.3:

**Figure 5.3 – The JUAA Accreditation Process (according to the JUAA Documents)**



During part 1, the university submits their own self-study report, which is then reviewed by the JUAA (2, 3), the JUAA then visit the university (4) before notifying the university of the results (5,6) and establishing a dialogue between the JUAA and university to iron out any possible discrepancies in reporting before notifying the public of the result (7). Table 5.3b shows this process in action at the case study institution.

**Table 5.3b: The Accreditation Process at Case University**

Year	Month	Development
2009	3	Announcement of the beginning of the accreditation at the <i>hyogikai</i> and <i>rijikai</i>
	4	Mandatory explanation meeting held by the JUAA for all faculty and administration staff
	4	Committees created for JUAA-related tasks
	5	<b>Internal Review begins</b>
	8	First draft of self-study report published
	10	Second draft of self-study report published
	10-11	Institution Evaluation and final Self-study sheets produced
	12	University basic data compiled for report
2010	1	Send first evaluation documents to the JUAA
	2-3	Response from JUAA
	3	Send institution evaluation and self-study documents to JUAA
	3	JUAA
	3-9	<b>External Review begins</b>
		Questions from JUAA
		Responses from university
	9	Dialogue continues
	10	Preparation for official evaluation visit by JUAA
	10-12	Official visit to university by JUAA
12	Dialogue regarding pass/fail result	
	Initial results given	
2011	1	Initial results delivered
	4	Results made public

The Self-study (self-evaluation) procedure of the process is deemed the most important. It follows a PDCA cycle; plan, do, check and act. The importance of this process in

Japanese culture – the *Kaizen* method – was outlined in Chapter 2.2.4. A further point to note is that *Kaizen* requires all employees to be involved in the change process as it is thought that by creating a *Kaizen* team within the organization a holistic *Kaizen* process can be achieved. During the planning stage, the university is expected to establish their objectives and educational goals. They then formulate a medium-term plan. This includes the formulation of educational goals, diploma policy, and organization and implementation policies for all educational goals. During the ‘Do’ process, the policies and practices are implemented. In the ‘Check’ process, the functioning of the educational system is verified, including students’ progress and results. The evaluation by external people is also included at this stage. Finally, during the ‘Act’ stage, there is the formulation of improvement measures and the further implementation of these improvements. This process should continue to spiral throughout the life of the university, not just during the accreditation procedure itself. The JUA outline the evaluation questions asked at each of these stages:

#### **PLAN**

- a) Are policies and goals appropriately specified?
- b) Is there a concrete action plan to realize such policies and goals?
- c) Is there a method to execute the action plan?
- d) Do the constituent members thoroughly share understanding of matters in (1) to (3)?

#### **DO**

- a) Have concrete subordinate goals based on the plan been established?
- b) Has each of these subordinate goals been made clear at the organizational/individual level?
- c) Are steady activities being executed based on the subordinate goals?
- d) Are creative measures being implemented to motivate constituent members to achieve goals?

#### **CHECK**

- a) Are the checks and evaluations on the actual state of activities constantly being conducted?
- b) Are checks and evaluations being carried out based on objective data?

- c) Are creative measures being taken to increase the reliability and validity of reviews and assessments?

#### **ACT**

- a) Are policies and goals being reexamined based on the results of checks/evaluations, and are the improvement measures necessary for plans and methods being established?
- b) Are approximately organized analyses being conducted on whether the cause of problems lies in the plans/methods or in the implementation of activities?
- c) Are problem areas and flaws that became clear based on reviews and assessments being dealt with appropriately?
- d) Have procedures and methods linked to reform and improvement of checks/evaluation results been specified?

Through this process the university must satisfy ten standards set out by the JUAA ([www.juaa.gov.jp](http://www.juaa.gov.jp)), which are detailed below. These standards are given to all faculty members and administrators at the universities that are going through accreditation procedures.

#### **[Mission and Goals]**

1. Universities must define appropriate goals based on their own mission for the objective of cultivation of human resources and other objectives in educational research, and must make them public.

#### **[Educational and Research Structure]**

2. Universities must establish necessary structures to carry out educational and research activities based on their own missions and goals.

#### **[Faculty Members and Faculty Structure]**

3. Universities must clarify the ideal image of faculty members and the policy for organizing faculty structures in order to realize their own missions and goals, and use

these as a basis to develop their faculty structures.

**[Educational Program, Instruction and Outcomes]**

4. Universities must specify educational objectives and use them as a basis to clarify their diploma policy and curriculum policy in order to realize their own missions and goals. Universities must also follow such policies to develop and enrich their educational programs and instructions to achieve sufficient educational outcomes, and confer degrees appropriately.

**[Student Admissions]**

5. Universities must stipulate proper admission policies in order to admit students in a fair and correct manner in accordance with their own mission and goals.

**[Student Services]**

6. Universities must provide satisfactory services for learning support, student support and career path support so that students can concentrate on their studies.

**[Educational and Research Environment]**

7. Universities must develop and manage appropriately a learning environment and an educational and research environment that enables students to study and faculty members to carry out educational and research activities in a necessary and sufficient manner.

**[Social Cooperation and Social Contribution]**

8. Universities must consider ways to cooperate with society, as well as openly contribute the results obtained from their educational and research activities.

**[Administration and Financial Affairs]**

9. Universities must carry out appropriate administration and management in accordance with written rules and regulations in order to exhibit their functions smoothly and sufficiently. Universities must also establish the appropriate organization for clerical work, as well as establish and manage a necessary and solid financial base in

order to support, maintain and improve education and research.

### **[Internal Quality Assurance]**

10. Universities must develop a system for assuring the quality of their education, regularly conduct self-studies, and publish information about their current state in order to realize their own missions and goals.

These ten standards must be met to achieve accreditation status.

In Chapter Two, a description of Kezar's (2001) research based principles were discussed. The table below confirms these research principles in relation to the case university and accreditation procedure conducted by the JUAA, showing that to some extent, the JUAA could be considered a research-based approach.

The following section will detail the changes that occurred at the case university prior to and following the accreditation procedure.

## **5.4. Changes at The Case University**

The case university has experienced many changes in its eighty-year history. Most of the changes have been in connection with wider forces such as globalization along with societal and cultural changes. As mentioned in the previous section, the following table highlights the broad development of the university since 1926.

**Table 5.4a: Case Study University History and Major Structural Changes since 1926**

November 1926	Establishment of a Women’s Dental College in Tokyo
April 1945	Rebuilding of facilities after World War 2
May 1946	New facilities created in Chiba prefecture
September 1947	University High School Established
November 1948	Main campus in central Tokyo rebuilt
May 1950	Establishment of a 2-year Women’s College specializing in English and Teachers’ license courses
February 1961	Further construction of Tokyo campus and establishment of school logo
April 1964	Course restructuring and opening of a Language Lab
September 1967	Opening of Chiba campus
April 1973	Establishment and formal recognition by the Ministry of Education for Movement away from science to language and culture courses
April 1982	Beginning of Western Culture, Language and Literature courses
April 1992	Faculty of Humanities established with departments of Language and Literature and Culture and Western Culture
April 2000	Establishment of Department of Communication and movement into a four-year university
April 2002	Establishment of the Faculty of Business

Administration	
April 2003	Department of Communication changed to the Faculty of International Communication
March 2006	Final graduation of two-year college students
March 2007	Building work completed on new campus in Tokyo
April 2008	Establishment of Graduate School of Business offering MBA courses
April 2009	Work begins on new sports facilities in Chiba
April 2011	Work completed on new sports facilities in Chiba

During the period 2009-2012, many changes emanated from internal and external reviews. The external recommendations came from the accreditation procedure analysis by the JUAA. The procedure called for an extremely in-depth look at the way the university is run and required self-reflection and compliance with JUAA guidelines. The specific changes recommended by the JUAA during the accreditation are shown in Table 5.4b. These recommendations would have been recognized during the procedure by the university during their internal review process 2009-2011. The JUAA included them in their final report and will check in three years to ensure all recommendations have been adhered to.

**Table 5.4b – Recommendations by the JUAA in direct relation to accreditation standards**

Accreditation standard	Recommendations
Missions and Goals	The university must find ways to better implement the third mission statement particularly in relation to careers advice to students
Education and Research Structure	There should be better linkages between education and research
Faculty Members and Faculty Structure	The university must find ways to address the top-heavy age-structure of faculty, particularly in the Business Faculty. The percentage of faculty over 60-years old is too high and the percentage of faculty under 40-years old is too low
Educational Program, Instruction and Outcome	Improvements must be made in teacher evaluation procedures International exchange efforts should be improved and more effort should be made to receive of students and teachers from overseas
Student Services	Policies on harassment should be developed

Education and Research Environment	Internationally-recognized academic output by faculty should increase over the next 5 years.  The library at the Tokyo campus is too small and needs to incorporate more desks
Internal Quality Assurance	A more rigid internal quality assurance system must be maintained

The external directives above are sources from documents received at faculty meetings and through announcements in presentations by official JUAA representatives at the case university.

During the process, there were also internal recommendations and implemented changes. The following section details the accreditation-related changes at the university during 2009-2012. They were explained in internal documents (faculty and committee meeting minutes, internal reports) and orally at faculty and committee meetings. The rationale behind these changes is stated as emanating from the accreditation procedure and have come as directives from the senior management of the university.

### **Teacher Evaluations**

Previously, teacher evaluations were carried out once a year on one class. The results were not made public. They were carried out by the university Faculty Development committee and consisted of approximately 15 questions about the teacher’s performance ranging from how they utilized the chalkboard to the atmosphere in the classroom. They also detailed the students’ attitude to the class. The major change with the evaluation procedure is that it is to be more transparent and the results visible to outside stakeholders. Now, teachers face student evaluations twice a year. Two classes are

selected at random from the teachers' weekly teaching load and these students are given a questionnaire (similar to the previous version) two classes taught by each teacher complete a questionnaire in summer and winter. The results of the evaluation are made public, displayed on the university homepage and each teacher receives a packet with their scores ranked against other teachers. Following the evaluation, the teachers are expected to write up a reflection paper, detailing their opinions on the evaluation and citing reasons for the positive or negative evaluations. These papers are then compiled into a book that is distributed to all teachers and made available to the general public online. The purpose of this is to enable teachers to engage in peer-learning. In one faculty, teachers who have obtained high scores make open their classroom doors for other teachers to view their practice over a certain period. In the other faculty, all teachers open their doors for public viewing.

### **Syllabus Contents**

Previously, the syllabus book both hard copy and online version, contained rather generic syllabus with topics for study listed each week and few details regarding homework tasks and specific assessment criteria. Now, the change directive states that syllabus must be more informative. They must include clear details for what will be taught every week, including page numbers of textbooks if used and learning outcomes for each lesson. They must also contain details of specific homework tasks and the timing of these and clear assessment guidelines and scoring procedures must be clearly laid out. In other words, a generic syllabus is unacceptable.

### **Harassment Policy**

Prior to the accreditation procedure, the university had no harassment policy. As a result the university developed a harassment policy. A small working group was set up under the direction of the vice-president and the resulting policy that was passed by the board of trustees states is now available for faculty, staff, students and the general public on the university homepage.

### **International Exchange**

Prior to the accreditation, the university had international cooperation and exchange relationships with universities in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia. Yet these relationships were deemed one-sided with only the case study university sending students overseas. A small number of international students, primarily from Asia, were on campus taking regular classes; yet, the case university was not receiving international students from its sister-schools. Based on the recommendations from the JUAA, the university made efforts to increase the international exchange activities. As well as campaigns to increase the number of students going overseas, the university developed sister-school relations with one university in China. During the accreditation procedure they also held a Chinese speech contest with guest judges from overseas. This was a very large event for the university, garnering press attention from both Japan and China. As a follow up to the speech contest, 2013 will see the start of a Chinese faculty exchange program where professors from China will act as guest researchers and lecturers at the university on a one-year program. Finally, 2012 saw the start of a new teaching-assistant program whereby a student from a partner institution in the US works at the university for one-year on an internship program. All these efforts have gone some way to strengthening the school's second mission and satisfying the criteria set by the JUAA.

### **Research Environment**

One issue that arose was the split campus set-up. Most full-time faculty members are required to work at both campuses, resulting in them having two research offices. This has been problematic in terms of resources and facilities meaning that research funds have been spent on computers and electrical equipment to furnish both offices. Additionally, the split campus has resulted in fewer opportunities for faculty members to meet face to face to engage in research projects or important meetings. The recommendations stated that improvements were needed in the field of professionalism and research, particularly relating to the amount of internationally recognized research undertaken by faculty members. A number of governmental research grants supported by the Ministry of Education (known as *kaken-hi*) are available every year in Japan. They are notoriously hard to get and the application documents are extremely lengthy, time

consuming and complex. It is not uncommon to be rejected multiple times when applying. As such, many universities have specific administrative departments on campus whose sole job is to support research applications (assistance with filling in forms, accounting, etc.). Prior to the accreditation, there was no formal support for such grant applications. Now, there are annual whole-school faculty development sessions where faculty members are given clear instructions on how to complete grant application forms. And, an office has been set up to deal with such specific queries. As a result, three teachers within the institution received a grant this academic year.

Additionally, applications for internal research funds were only superficially checked. As a result of the accreditation, the use of research budgets (from the university internal fund) are now more heavily scrutinized. As an example, every book purchased must be detailed and reasons given for the purchase of every item. The Ministry of Education, who also called for greater transparency of funds, has also influenced these changes.

### **Educational Programs**

Prior to the accreditation the case university consisted of One Faculty of Humanities; with a Department of Human Science and a Department of International Communication. As a result of the accreditation, from April 2013, the Faculty of Humanities will split into two faculties, The Faculty of Global Communication (with the Department of English Communication and Department of Global Studies) and Faculty of Human Science (with the Department of Psychology) (this is a recently announced change since the accreditation was passed). Again, the development of the global and international educational programs is more fitting with the university's mission statement and suggestions from the JUAA.

This chapter has provided an insight into the university in the case study and has outlined the nature of the changes connected to the accreditation procedure. The final report issued in April 2011 and summarized above, signal the major changes that were required and implemented as a result of the accreditation with an additional two changes (the change to academic programs and increased powers of internal research centers) that

were announced after accreditation was granted (these were included as they help to illustrate the big picture of the institution). The entire accreditation process relies on self-reflection and continuous change on the part of the faculty and administration. These points of change form the basis of the discussion of change and the next chapter will present how faculty made sense of the accreditation and change procedure.

# Chapter 6

## Presentation of Findings

### 6.1. Introduction

This section will present the major findings from the interviews and document analysis based around the key themes that emanated from the literature, particularly Weick (1995) and Ericson (2001), document analysis, and interviews. After a careful review of the coding and through an in-depth reflection on the data in Chapter Two, seven explanatory devices are used as a basis for discussion. These devices also show how the framework has been applied as they match the properties and the codes that emerged. These are the explanatory devices:

- (i) Bracketing and labeling of the accreditation procedure;
- (ii) Professionalism among faculty;
- (iii) Stress experienced through accreditation and change;
- (iv) Japanese cultural norms and expectations;
- (v) Opinions of management and leadership through change;
- (vi) Investment in a vision;
- (vii) Expressing the culture of the organization.

The way individuals made sense of the accreditation procedure and change occurring within the institution is seen through a sensemaking lens and will be presented as a 'realist tale' (Van Mannen, 1988). In the final discussion section, Chapter 7, attention is focused on the interconnectedness of these themes with sensemaking, (which provides a common language with which to discuss the characteristics of the organization) and the conceptual framework by Ericsson (2001).

#### 6.1.1 Bracketing and Labeling the Accreditation Procedure

Tacit knowledge in the expertise of individuals, explicit knowledge in rules and routines

and cultural knowledge of the assumptions and beliefs in the organization are used to assign value to new information (see Chapter 2). In this instance, respondents exhibited a strong knowledge of the culture of the organization and somewhat strong awareness of the explicit knowledge of what was expected of them, but they did not have strong tacit knowledge of those in management positions above them.

There appears to be a strong connection between levels of informedness and knowledge of the accreditation procedure and gaps in communication within the institution. As can be seen from the following statements, faculty felt there were missed opportunities for open dialogue and a lack of communication between all levels within the institution:

*People were thinking about it [the accreditation] but it was not spoken out. Maybe they were thinking secretly. It wasn't a kind of topic to be discussed openly (B).*

This shows a possibility of deception and distrust among members. Additionally, some faculty stated that they had no idea the accreditation had even been underway:

*I don't know anything about the accreditation (K).*

This also reflects on the individual's commitment to the organization as there were multiple opportunities for faculty to gain basic awareness that the process was occurring such as through workshops and faculty meetings. This statement could therefore represent reluctance on the faculty member's part to be part of the community. Although some faculty members acknowledged there was an accreditation, they were not aware that the result was publicly displayed on the homepage:

*...For me I've never seen the logo on our homepage for the accreditation until now! Wow, we have that?... (B).*

Again, showing a lack of organizational knowledge and also lack of knowledge about the JUAA. In terms of communication, some faculty drew comparisons with experience at

other institutions:

*...I haven't noticed any difference at all when the accreditation process was going on, compared to another university I work at, it affected me almost not at all....(A)*

This shows how the respondent thought the procedure was working in another university but did not feel part of the accreditation at the case institution. A is a non-tenured faculty member, on campus four days a week on a contract basis. The case university received an explanation session by the JUAA at the beginning of the procedure. All faculty members and administration staff were required to attend and received documents outlining the procedure. Yet, it was not mandatory for the part-time and contract employees. Although A was also part-time at another institution he felt more connected to the procedure at that institution than his base institution; showing a lack of communication within the case institution. Teachers such as A have significant amounts of face-time with the student body yet were left feeling uninformed and *out of the loop* (C) when it came to changes related to the accreditation. The JUAA handbook states that:

When constructing an internal quality assurance system, it is important to clarify goals and plans, share these with constituent members, make diligent efforts to realize these goals and plans, and steadily improve quality based on appropriate feedback from checks/evaluations and reform (p.12)

Yet, faculty members interviewed, showed that despite attempts to inform them, the goals and plans were clearly not shared amongst the faculty. In some instances this indicates that the changes may have felt like unplanned changes.

In general, of those who had knowledge about the accreditation, the initial consensus was that accreditation was deemed a good idea, as it provided an *objective insight into the work* (B) and although it was *quite abstract* it provided *a sense of direction* (G). Faculty became *used to the terms like, admission policy, mission statement and vision and stuff like that* (B).

Movement towards supporting the missions and goals of the institution could be said to be blocked by the knowledge gaps that appear through the interviews, as shared knowledge is needed to make meaning. We could conclude that faculty members fabricate both individually and collectively new knowledge by drawing on past experiences and outside sources. Sensemaking and the meaning created was affected by the amount of 'raw material' that was available (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990) to the respondents. The following section will detail faculty members' comments on their roles and responsibilities and thoughts on professionalism before, during and after the accreditation.

### **6.1.2. Professionalism Among Faculty**

Debates and discussions surrounding what a university actually is and faculty members' roles in the institution were central to respondents' discussions. Faculty were concerned about the teaching-research-administration balance they were expected to juggle, stating issues with responsibility and professionalism. The case-study university takes an approach to human resource management that is similar to Japanese corporations. Faculty members take management positions and are expected to take on substantial administration and committee work in order to make the university function successfully. A full-time faculty member is expected to sit on anywhere between 4-6 committees that all meet once a month, in addition to monthly faculty meetings:

*Everybody is too busy doing teaching and research and a lot of pressure on everything and that makes the whole thing an unhealthy direction (F).*

Yet, as can be seen from the previous statement, the faculty members are overworked. Signs of burnout were emerging and increased stress. Power (1999) details the situation of first order and second order functions for employees. This is when organizational resources are shifted from first order (in this instance working directly with students and

developing programs) to second order (the greater need for paperwork and accountability, taking time and energy away from teaching and research). The respondents clearly articulated their views about this in relation to change and the accreditation:

*The management is employing individuals who aren't interested in doing research or who don't have the skills capable of conducting research, who don't have the training.... We should have senior professors here. Why aren't they mentoring us? Other professors? More junior professors? Why? Because they are too busy with their teaching and administration duties. Meetings, right? (G).*

G blamed poor management decisions for the lack of adequate human resource management and faculty development. Younger faculty members were actively seeking out mentor or *senpai* type relationships and opportunities to join research collaborations. These relationships are fundamental to the research culture in Japan, where research groups have much power and influence in the academic field, if one does not belong to such a group, opportunities for grants and promotion can be limited. These types of relationships were lost at the expense of increasing demands on teachers' administration duties.

Some respondents could be described as having a loose coupling with the institution; they were relatively new to the profession yet their enthusiasm during the honeymoon period of their employment was over and they appeared to be running a fine line between survival and teacher burnout:

*When I'm tired after the term you feel exhausted and you don't really feel good about it. I did as much as I could and the result wasn't really good (K).*

The sense of exhaustion and disappointment from K shows how dedicated professionals were becoming increasingly disenfranchised from the organization. K didn't express what support was available when one feels that way or how the situation could be improved.

There was one member of faculty who insisted that the accreditation was an opportunity to improve the faculty as it called for greater accountability and that this should help faculty to better understand and establish their roles and responsibilities. He stated that the accreditation *does have good effects on the assurances on the quality of the lecturers that is part of the internal quality assurance system* (E) and that *what professors should be focusing on is what they do in class*. He cited the overhaul of the way that syllabus are written as one of the main talking points among faculty:

*The process of writing up the syllabus has changed and this is proof of the internal quality assurance system is working. There is a lot more details in there now* (E).

And although there were *several affirmative opinions from others there was lots of resentment and reactions against the change* (E) because people don't want their job descriptions to change. Teachers complained to him that having to be more accountable in the documentation was *cumbersome and time consuming* (E) and often claimed, *why do I have to do this?* (E). Being forced to be more accountable was more 'stimulating' to some professors, especially *when [they had] to write up what they do every week for all to see* (E), suggesting that after the accreditation procedure is long gone, professors will *appear to be of a different opinion* (E).

An interesting discussion then ensued surrounding the idea of class *contracts*. The teacher in question stated that, *contracts are not well understood in Japan. I give them to my students a mutual contract because I understand about accountability* (E). He saw his role as providing a service to the students, he must hold up his side of the bargain and the students must hold up their side so everything will be successful, but if not, he doesn't give second chances because it is something students will have to learn about in life anyway. He believed that holding oneself accountable and being transparent were key elements of teacher's roles during the orientation. He concluded that the JUAAs' *recommendation[s] [are] good and beneficial* and particularly *influential* when considering budget constraints (E). He appreciated what the JUAAs recommended,

thinking that the whole experience should inspire teachers to better understand their roles and responsibilities.

Although it is reasonable to expect academics to balance traditional academic values with the new external demands for accountability, and despite a lone voice among the respondents agreeing with this sentiment, we can see from the comments above that this is still somewhat unattainable for the faculty at this institution. The following section will detail issues that arose in relation to morale among faculty, which is closely connected to professionalism.

### **6.1.3. Stress Experienced Through Accreditation and Change**

When people are asked to change or are faced with a new situation, they often feel under stress, and unless they obtain adequate support, they may experience a dip in morale as indicated in this statement by (K):

*I mean I try not to feel anything, that's how I receive it [the accreditation and change] because if I take it so seriously. It really hurts me I think. It's quite psychological. If I take it really seriously, it really disappoints me. To be positive to teach well, I try not to take it seriously, escape from the reality (K).*

What was quite depressing was the explicit way that some respondents detailed the emotional decline in colleagues and the effect that the previous two years had had:

*I met him yesterday [middle manager] he used to have so much fight in him but he was so distressed, I don't know what has happened to him. He is like a ghost now, it's so difficult for him to fight change for us. He has worked so hard (K about I).*

The middle manager was a Dean and despite Deans now taking greater managerial roles, in this instance, he was unable to have a voice in the senior management team due to politics of the institution and the pull between his research, teaching and management

commitments. The metaphor of a *fight* (D, F, I, J, L) against change is powerful and indicative of the mood of the those faculty members interviewed, who thought that despite the accreditation, *nothing has become quite concrete* (B). Therefore, some faculty members *really wonder the point?* (B). This lack of will to continue to fight and despondency goes against the JUAA's efforts to strengthen the school and create a shared goal and vision. F stated she would continue to be *demoralized* if she cannot do the things she wants to do. Research suggests it is the leader's job to maintain morale (Ramsden, 1998) and thus we can postulate that through this example the top-down leadership style did not take ownership of the accreditation process.

Some faculty members recognized that they might be fighting a losing battle:

*The purpose of the accreditation process is ensure there is quality so if you are doing a quality job then they have some room for you to change things but here I don't think that anyone really is bothered (F).*

Yet, there were some positive comments from respondents who stated that the accreditation, *despite being negative, has made us more conscious about better education* (G) and that *without thinking, we are getting used to being good teachers* (M). A number of respondents stated that this was due to the fact that teachers' evaluation scores were now made public and that the accountability and transparency had forced improvement in standards:

*The average score [of the teachers evaluation from students] is getting better because we see other teachers scores, there is a pressure to do better (E)*

There were also pockets of positivity expressed in light of the increased amount of teamwork required as part of the accreditation:

*the thing that is really exciting for me is that I'm more collaborative with my*

*colleagues though collaborating we create this sort of positive field and it's a situation where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (C).*

This does signal that, despite previous comments, the JUAA procedure is effective. What must be mentioned here, however, is that respondent (C) is a part-time, limited-term contract employee who went to none of the information meetings and who has no meeting or committee responsibilities. This highlights the difference between these teachers who are expected to just teach and research and those full-time faculty members with increased administrative responsibilities who appear much more jaded and affected by the procedure. This respondent does acknowledge that his situation is *just, a zone of positivity in an area of a lot of negativity here (C)*. Which is highlighted by the type of interaction K had with a colleague:

*The other day I met her in the elevator and I said, 'I'm sorry it's been so busy for you but I haven't really been helpful for you' and she said, 'It's ok, the best thing you can do for me is just shut up'. I thought 'Thank You very much for your good suggestion'. So sometimes, trying not to touch is the best way (K)*

This type of remark can lead to negative Respondent F detailed the old versus new aspects of change within the institution and suggesting it is difficult to reconcile the old order with the new:

*the University family did this, then they built this but people didn't like it. People who have been round along time understand these ways of thinking (F)*

*[the former president] thought that education was most important, then [the next in line] thought differently, and so the changes kept coming when the leaders changed (J).*

This shows that these changes are constantly occurring despite the accreditation. Yet, what must be remembered is that as Clark (1983) states, 'academic structures do not

simply move aside or let go; the heavy hand of history is felt in the structures and beliefs (p.114) in the institution. The following section will outline the faculty members' references to society and culture, which were deemed to be a key part of understanding sensemaking at the institution.

These comments signaled issues of morale and identity, that the accreditation procedure and change was creating stress and a decline in morale among faculty:

*Last year they said people will be visiting your classroom and be prepared on this day and this day and nobody came, right? Except, S san came for five minutes, so I thought, huh, what's that? But it seemed to me one of those things like...you know a job. Like a tate-mae thing but not a deep meaningful.... yeah like a box check, yeah, that's right, like people are too busy but they've got to check this box off. So let's do it and let's check the box but not make use of it as an opportunity for real potential growth, right? (C).*

#### **6.1.4. Japanese Cultural Norms and Expectations**

There were many references to society, culture and identity in the interviews and this is clearly an important part of the discourse of change. The term 'culture' in this section refers to the wider view of the culture of Japanese society, not the culture of the institution. There is clearly a focus on the importance of tradition in education as respondents stated that Japanese students usually *choose universities due to their knowledge of brands, tradition and history of the schools' and that they don't 'choose schools based on this accreditation system (G).* Faculty members recognized that it might work for a university that is not really famous or who doesn't have a strong tradition but that tradition and image were deemed more important than accreditation results and as the accreditation system is relatively new, it is still treated with skepticism and not respected as much as the reputations high-level universities have already established. The image is that they are too big to fail.

In light of the 2011 natural disasters in Japan, a number of respondents cited instances where they saw similarities between the government and the running of the institution. They made social and political comparisons between the Japanese Prime Minister, economic woes and the response to the nuclear accident:

*If I try to get heroic about this I get crazy. It gets me so mad, everything, how many these organizations exist? And the same about nuclear things, bureaucratic things in this country (K).*

*Our university is the same as the government. If we change the head, do we have a good government now? No, probably, we've been doing it for about twenty years for this but things are still the same, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Labour party, they are all still the same. In America, too. We had Obama and first black president but we don't have anything different, somebody is controlling it (K).*

The axiom in Japanese *uso mo hōben* can be translated as *lying is also a means to an end*. The phrase that appeared on numerous occasions throughout the interviews was *tatema* (B, F, G, H) that could be loosely translated as ‘pretense’:

*you can say anything in the paper, it's like, ah honestly speaking, we are like lazy students doing homework, you just do the homework cause it's gotta be done (K).*

In the crudest of terms it indicates a time when you say something you think the listener wants to hear, which to some extent is lying. The antinomy of this word is *hone*, which means one's true feelings and emotions, with *baka shojiki* referring to disclosing true feelings and honesty. The way that respondents referred to the accreditation as *tatema* is quite damning. It reduces it down to a process where the truth is changed or modified to suit the audience. It could imply that as long as goals are accomplished, lying could be seen as a means to an end:

*The [middle manager] was throwing in things we seem to lack for this*

*thing [accreditation]. Just get the information in (B).*

On the other hand, you could justify this dynamic as a means of conflict avoidance in the pursuit of maintaining group harmony and saving face. The process of accreditation and change creates chaos and order. Chaos in that sensemaking is in flux and faculty members do not show a clear collective meaning of the processes involved and order in that the JUAA set strict guidelines to be adhered to and specific, detailed ordered documents must be created. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that the process of questioning and reconsidering existing premises fosters organizational knowledge creation, which is quite a Japanese perspective. They advocate that the institution has a collective sense of identity and purpose. This will be explored in greater detail in concluding sections.

Additionally, the issue of ‘duty’ also came in to play as a cultural issue raised by respondents as some faculty members said they did what they had to do because it was their job and not because it is what they necessarily believe is the right thing to do. From a language perspective the word duty in Japanese ‘*gimu*’ can be a loaded word, with one respondent stating that:

*in general, I don't think Japanese people have a strong sense of duty unless they are a police officer, teacher, and member of the self-defense force. I often wonder what I'm supposed to do as a teacher, but personally, I do this because I vaguely feel that it is my job or role to do so. I think nowadays Japanese people need to be told what their jobs are because we don't share a sense of duties and our code of conduct is based on common sense or social custom that is disappearing fast. (B)*

These comments are a reflection on peoples’ views on society and procedures like an accreditation are a necessary endeavor for faculty to be told what they should be doing. The following section will discuss the faculty members’ opinions on leadership and management at the case university.

### 6.1.5. Opinions of Management and Leadership Through Change

The management and leadership of the university was called into question by many respondents:

*If you want to be the manager of a private university all you need is 'family' '家'. They are not educational professionals (J).*

There was concern that people [involved in senior management] *don't have qualifications in this (J)* and that there was nothing that could be done because *the basics are that the Chairman has money. That's it. (J)*

There are several limitations to having an all-powerful leader particularly that it is now a 'truism' that staff must own decisions if they are to be successfully implemented (Bush, 2012).

The emerging image of management during the accreditation is management as control, the director image of managing change, which is a top-down, characteristic of Fayol change management, where the organization runs like a machine:

*Too many things he [University Chairman] wants to be in charge of. Because he decides everything, all the faculty members lose morale because of it. They are demoralized (F).*

The strategists of the change were seen to be the senior manager (chairman) but in reality, strategists were also the JUAA. The implementer was the head of the internal accreditation committee and the change recipients were everyone else within the institution. As (D) noted, *there is a little bit of gap between how they [senior managers] see us and how people feel inside*. With some faculty even using the term *dictator (F, K, M)* or *monarchy situation (F)* in that *there are not too many things you can decide for*

*yourself* (F). And others refusing to pass comment on record about the senior management highlighting the power-balance of the institution and inability to express feelings openly:

*.....well...about rijicho [University Chairman] ...actually are we recording, can we stop at this bit..... (K).*

Authority is a type of legitimate power that is vested in leaders in an organization. Based on the differences between authority and influence as outlined by Bacharach and Lawler (1980:44), authority is the dominant behavior extolled by senior managers in the case-study university. The comments indicate the presence of positional power (Bush, 2012; Morgan, 1997) and that the Chairman shares the characteristics of utilizing political strategies to maintain and extend their control. As an example, there were comments suggesting divide and rule strategies (Hoyle, 1986:140-6), co-optation, examples of controlling information and controlling meetings. The following section will summarize the discussions above by attempting to describe the culture of the institution.

#### **6.1.6. Investment in a Vision**

The accreditation procedure called for all sections of the university to reaffirm their vision or ‘mission.’ Interviews consistently expressed the view that the crafting of the schools vision, and each vision takes the pump-priming approach (Nutt and Backoff 1997) in that the CEO, in this case the chairman, provided the visionary ideas and got selected people and groups within the organization (the *rijikai* and board) to further develop these ideas within his broad parameters. However, not all faculty were invested in the vision and it wasn’t adequately shared:

*Cause there have been a lack of understanding about what is really going on here and that there is a lack of vision and that’s there is a...it takes a lot for someone to recognize what is going on, someone who has actually experienced it. It needs someone with some depth?...Emotional connection (K).*

As Gioia and Thomas (1996), conclude in their work, change is linked to a move from a focus on the substance of the organization to a focus on image and mission (Alversson, 1990), and then back to substance. The accreditation procedure calls for members of the institution to place a focus on the substance of their university, before a public image can be presented (the result of the accreditation) before then returning to an analysis of the substance of the institution by continuing with the self-study spiral established through the process. Yet, in this case study, it appears that the image is the goal and that some members of the institution just want to ‘get’ the acknowledgement and image to share with stakeholders, without spending sufficient time refocusing on the substance of the organization. It is thought that achieving an increased image (recognition and the seal of approval from the accreditation association) will foster substantive improvement. This is yet to be seen and will be played out over the next three years before the JAAA return to the institution.

#### **6.1.7. Expressing the Culture of the Organization**

The respondents expressed that this aspect of the institutional culture was so entrenched that, ‘accreditation cannot touch the *taishitsu* (culture) of the institution.’ The word *taishitsu* has a variety of different meanings in Japanese but the most significant meaning is a general more holistic term that can mean ‘bodily nature’ such as the natural disposition of a persons’ body. So it could indicate that by describing university culture and using the word ‘*taishitsu*’ that person means that the university has such an entrenched culture that it is a deep and difficult thing to change. I was intrigued as to why the respondent used this term during our interview so during the write-up, I followed up by asking her to explain the significance of using that word. She said,

*Taishitsu is more powerful, deeper way of describing the culture of the university than bunka. If you use ‘taishitsu’ it means everyone in every corner thinks the school thinks and works in a similar way and that it is almost impossible to change anything. Choosing that word helped me to reflect my sense of powerlessness and*

*helplessness (B).*

Another reason for this was the culture of ‘academic inbreeding’ (Horta, Sato & Yonezawa, 2011). The concept of ‘academic inbreeding’ is notorious in Japan and although the university in this study is not a well-know and high-ranking university, the senior management all graduated from the same university and a large number of senior business faculty worked in the same companies in the private sector. Therefore, faculty outside these ‘networks’ feel somewhat out-of-the loop, discriminated against and cite the large gap in thinking as a barrier to open communication in the organization.

It is useful to look back at the case university now in terms of its culture. This will allow us to see a broad picture of the institution from which to draw conclusions. The following summary points show the way that respondents reflected on the culture of the institution (the following examples are taken from the research interviews):

### **Stories**

People within the institution tell stories of the past versus the present; they draw on examples of how previous middle managers used to run the university;

*For people who came new to the university the time and atmosphere changed completely 180 degree change.*

*Before that when X sensei was the dean, he considered that teachers as teaching faculty members not research faculty at all. He stated that specifically (F).*

They also tell stories of problems that were encountered, and the history of the organization.

### **Rituals and Routines**

Teachers expect to have freedom to do as they please with regard to research output and teaching. They expect to have significant time available for teaching and research;

teachers expect to be autonomous; teachers expect to fulfill their ‘duty’;

*If we focus on our research we can get busy and do not have to get involved in the university politics (D).*

Administrators expect senior management to make decisions; employees expect senior management to take overall responsibility for everything.

### **Symbols**

The mission statement, 面倒見 (*mendo-mi*) is well known by all employees, used in all documentation for PR purposes:

*Mendo mi, yeah, I know what it means but is it really important? It seems oversimplified and lacks depth (F).*

Status symbols include a ceremony at the start of the year for employees who have been promoted; Offices are status symbols; the mosaic and logo on the building are seen as symbols but not well understood by current staff.

### **Organizational Structure**

The university functions under a hierarchical structure; formal; mechanistic not organic; formal lines of authority often confused; informal lines apparent; certain personal and family relationships influence decision making and lines of communication.

### **Control Systems**

The institution generally tightly controlled; no reward for good work, good work seen as duty; no obvious penalty for poor work; only non-native Japanese staff have evaluations and appraisals; Japanese staff have appraisals only when seeking promotion at 3 and 5 year intervals after joining faculty.

## Power Structure

Chairman has real power; Board of Trustees has power; family connections or OB/OG network influence decisions:

*They all come from the same place' they are all graduates of Y university (D)*

As can be seen from the summary points above, due to the deep seated culture of the institution, change wouldn't happen as a result of the accreditation but only because of a *change of faculty* particularly when *people retire in a few years (D)*. Change was deemed only to happen when the *chairman retires (F)*. Respondents admitted that although accreditation *is a good chance to review the whole system* it is *not powerful enough to really change and make a difference (F)*.

## 6.2. General Reflections

However, after the procedure, faculty began to question its relevance and purpose for the university, which can be seen through the following statements:

*....[At first I thought] it's not a bad idea to have accreditation but uh once we've gone through it, well...what is it..um...like, yeah yeah... (B).*

*...I read the points they suggested, we correct, but the suggestions weren't concrete so I thought wow, you could pick up anything?... (D).*

Some faculty expressed disillusionment at the process and questioned the academic rigor of the procedure; *'I don't know if the assessment itself is really right or not?'* (F) with B noting:

*.... I was surprised at the result so I don't really trust the [committee] that they have the proper way of conducting the accreditation. (D).*

H asked, *to what extent that assessment is fair?* while J concluded,

*...accreditation is better than not having it all, but the way they do it is not the way it should be done (J).*

Some colleagues expressed disbelief at the fact that the university had passed, *I don't know how this university could get accredited (G)* and also highlighted a lack of faith in both the institution and the procedure:

*...If this university passed the accreditation process then the process must be just a formality, superficial, yeah because they must have decided before they even started that they were going to give us accreditation you know and just put make us jump through a few hoops (I)*

This comment also touches on Japanese culture, which will be referred to in the following section. There were also negative comments made about the knowledge and specialism level of those from the JUAA that conducted the review. Respondent I stated that members of the JUAA were on a *golden parachute deal* in that they were former professors and government bureaucrats who had this easy job and ‘*very little qualifications*’ to qualify for them for the role. They were described as *amakudari* because the procedure is *all about connections and who supports who (B)*. Showing that they felt it was a *government prize (K)* to be granted a *cushy (K)* position after retirement. *Amakudari* literally translated means ‘*decent from heaven*’ and refers to the practice in Japanese business when retiring bureaucrats are shifted from their position to positions related public sector work. The purpose is to make ties between the public and private sector stronger. Respondents showed outward disrespect for the evaluators: *how can they understand what I'm doing in my classes, they aren't teachers! (D)*. Despite the JUAA handbook stating that:

The evaluators who carry out these reviews are comprised mainly of faculty members and clerical staffers from full member universities, for their specialized knowledge and insight in university education and research

Those teachers under the microscope felt that in interactions with the evaluators, they didn't feel the evaluators were qualified to comment and couldn't engage in appropriate academic discourse. Levels of informedness within organizations are an important indication of the level of communication within an organization. Do people choose not to engage in communication or are there just poor communication practices occurring? Examples of both can be seen above. The practical importance of clear communication in change circumstances cannot be underestimated and trust; communication and leadership were found to have a positive and significant relationship with knowledge sharing and informedness. One main facet of the accreditation process was the concept of peer-review; yet, although the information was shared it wasn't actively picked up or acknowledged by faculty. This possible feigned ignorance could be an indication of the multi-dimensional nature of resistance to change as feigning ignorance is one means of passive resistance, along with agreeing verbally but not following through (as can be seen in the discussions below).

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the NPM managerial practices are infiltrating HE institutions around the world and accreditation procedures are ways of monitoring and evaluating institutional performance on global standards. Most accreditation agencies in Japan require the universities to produce a strategic institutional plan for accreditation. Yet as was seen in this study, faculty did not feel involved enough to take ownership of the plan. Such ownership is needed in order for faculty to truly understand the direction of the institution. It is argued that in Japan, the balance of managerial power in private universities is firmly towards the top of the institution. These private sector management practices are an inherent part of working in a private university.

Not only did respondents express dissatisfaction with the senior management team, but also stated that they felt middle managers were somewhat ineffective in their positions, *I*

*thought, yeah, good points but...they [middle-management] didn't, I didn't think they followed things through (I). Although people recognized that the accreditation association was asking them to clarify the way they make important decisions they still felt each section is quite bara bara (disorganized) (B).*

Based on Oreg's (2003) descriptions of resistance to change, the internal head of the accreditation committee stated that although in many cases change did occur, a number of colleagues exhibited a passive resistance to change. Characteristics of the change were that fellow committee members may be agreed verbally with change but they didn't follow through;

*.....I asked and asked many times but in the end I ended up writing almost all this myself..... (H)*

The '*this*' in this quote refers to the all-inclusive accreditation document (Item 5 in Table 3.5.3) delivered to the JUAA. The failure of people to contribute to this document in the way outlined above is known as malicious compliance; a failing to support and withholding information. This was cited as coming from the fact that *nobody wants to change, they want paradise, they have built it and they want to keep it (D).*

This section has presented the voice of the respondents through their quotes, drawing on the five main themes uncovered through the coding procedure. The following section will discuss these findings through Weick's lens of sensemaking and Ericson's framework in order to provide a generalizable view of the issues concerning higher education, accreditation and change.

# Chapter 7

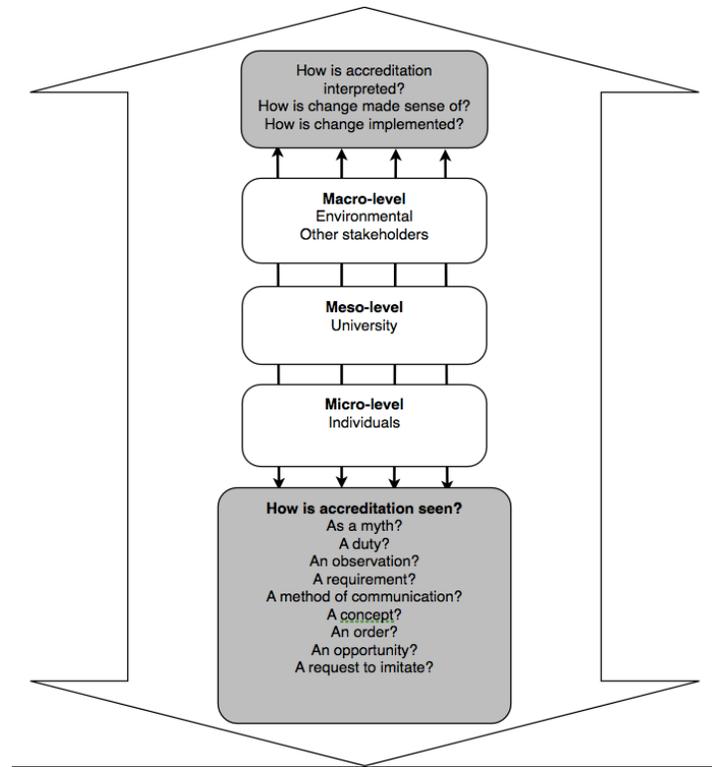
## Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

The following section will revisit the initial research questions providing an insight into how faculty members of a university make sense of organizational change and accreditation. The whole accreditation procedure could be considered similar to the vision of the university - it is vision as storytelling (Levin, 2000). It appears that the accreditation only outlines what the university *is*. It only gives the philosophy of how to do the work, it defines the outcomes but does not do enough to show the actual future (Levin, 2000:93) and does not show the true heart of the institution.

Figure 7.1 is a diagrammatic representation of accreditation at differing levels. It highlights the relationship between accreditation individuals, the institution and the environment, and shows that this discussion is concerned with the meso-level of how accreditation is internally interpreted. On an environmental, macro-level, the accreditation is examined by outside authorities such as MEXT and the JUA. The primary audience for the accreditation procedure consists of key stakeholders; the students themselves. Although as the respondents commented, it is actually not always the students who decide which university they will attend. There are numerous stakeholders; initially students' parents and grandparents hold the purse strings with finances having significant sway on the choice of school; high school teachers and principles (who are motivated not only by their students but by raising the profile of their own institution); local educational consultants who work for private companies (who receive commission for getting students into certain schools); local business in the community (as these are often financially-affiliated with the university or who rely on business from the university); other competing institutions; and finally, future graduate employers and recruitment agencies. More research is needed to see how these stakeholders view accreditation since in this research I have only attempted to ascertain the impact of accreditation on faculty and the institution.

**Figure 7.1: Impact of Accreditation at varying levels**



On the organizational meso-level this study has explored how the accreditation is internally interpreted, how change is made sense of and how it is or is not implemented. Finally, on the individual micro-level we can see how individuals make sense of the accreditation. Based on the interviews, Table 7.1 shows how the individuals in this study appear to see the accreditation process:

**Table 7.1: Views of Accreditation**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>View of Accreditation</b>
(A)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(B)	Accreditation as a need for imitation but also as myth
(C)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(D)	Accreditation as myth
(E)	Accreditation as a form of communication and observation
(F)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(G)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(H)	Accreditation as a form of communication and observation
(I)	Accreditation as myth
(J)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(K)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(L)	Accreditation as a duty/requirement
(M)	Accreditation as a form of communication

What is interesting from this table again is the use of the term ‘*duty*’ that was briefly discussed in Chapter 5. I included it again here as many respondents used it in Japanese (*gimu*), during discussions as one of the prominent words in the pilot interviews. A synonym is responsibility (*sekinin*). In Japanese, the cultural concept of Gift Giving or *Giri* helps to explain the significance of the idea of ‘*duty*’. Carrier (1990) explored the concept of gift giving in Japanese culture and believed that the exchange of gifts is ‘socially regulated’ (p.19) he continued the work of Benedict (1989) who explored the use of the words ‘*giri*’ and ‘*on*’ - debt and obligation. *Gimu* according to Benedict (1989) is something that a person must do, no matter how troublesome or difficult it is as he owes doing it to his/her family or superiors. Even if those complying with the act feel

unwilling, it is never defined outwardly as unwilling. In this instance, many respondents stated they had an obligation to follow the accreditation procedures and thus, they did it. Therefore, if people make sense of the procedure as merely a ‘*duty*,’ something they must comply with, is the procedure really worthwhile? Will the procedure be a catalyst for positive reflection and change if people are not invested in the process? I argue that the accreditation procedure in Japan, despite its claims to encourage autonomous improvement through engaged peer-review and internal quality assurance, is a box ticking exercise that is completed with little enthusiasm by a limited number of faculty. The culture of the institution is seen as a fundamental barrier to positive change, missing the opportunities provided by the procedure.

## **7.2. Research Questions Revisited**

### **RQ1: How do faculty make-sense of institutional change related to accreditation?**

The findings of this research will now be discussed in relation to Weick’s (2001) properties of sensemaking and Ericson’s framework.

As Weick (2001) ascertains, sensemaking is grounded in identity construction. Throughout the accreditation procedure the faculty in this study demonstrated confusion between their varying identities. Professional identity characterizes the person’s importance for his/her profession and professional activity while professional activity (Povarenkov, 2002) is connected to professional identity, professional experience and professional productivity. In this case, individuals were at odds with their professional identity and activity. They were asking ‘who should I be’ and ‘what should I be like’ (Berns, 1982) at different stages of the accreditation. Freedom and autonomy are intrinsic values for academics (Altbach, 2006; Middlehurst, 1993); yet, these were being compromised through the accreditation procedure. Some respondents indicated a previous inherent trust placed on academics (Altbach, 2006) but the new accreditation procedures appear to be eroding this while consequently putting increased pressures on them.

There were clear examples of friction between faculty members' roles as educators, academic researchers, and university administrators. It appeared that when the over-worked faculty began to bracket and notice an incident while wearing one 'hat' they quickly became conscious of how the change would impact them in their other 'hats'. Their identities were constructed around particular parts of their job; examining different circumstances through differing identities lead to a negation of their identity. The respondents showed that emotionally, they were often at odds with their sense of identity. This was not surprising as at times of instability, there can be a crisis of professional identity. Research shows that identity and loyalty of academics lies within their own departments and within their own field (Clegg, 2003; Coaldrake and Steadman, 1998) while it is unsurprising that the faculty interviewed expressed conflicts with their identities. The accreditation is asking teachers who were 'teaching' focused to engage in more research activities and the restructure of the centers that started in 2012 resulted in teachers becoming separated from their original departments.

We can see that the individual sensemaking taking place is somewhat problematic as it deviates from the messages of change coming from the senior management and the mission of the JUAA. The faculty members' emotional engagement with the situation has a great bearing on the sense they make of the situation. The institution in this case has not provided its people with a definitive sense of who they are and what they represent.

In terms of Weick's assertion that sensemaking is enactive of environments, in this instance, it could be said that sensemaking was induced by certain changes in the environment. In general, it was observed that almost all faculty members had little influence over their own environments and were restricted as to who they could have ties with, particularly as the members of the internal accreditation committee were handpicked by the Chairman. The split campus meant that there was a discontinuity in the flow of peoples' experience. These discontinuities became part of the data that faculty had to make sense of.

Weick also states that sensemaking is focused on and extracted by cues. In this case, this was another area where sensemaking was problematic. Members of the organization are usually able to see observable artifacts and structures that they use to help them develop their perceptions about the organization. The case university is split over two campuses with some faculty teaching at both campuses and some only at one. This situation meant that not everyone was able to see these cues, thus sensemaking was problematic. The institutional context does not enhance the visibility of important inputs to its sensemaking process. This ties in with the social aspect of sensemaking, in that interactions between faculty members was limited due to the travel between campuses and the disjointed schedules. Many faculty members were unable to see other members of their department or other departments because their schedules never matched thus reducing the time available for social interaction and sensemaking to take place. The lack of collegiality due to the physical location of the campus and the demanding schedule of the faculty result in the erosion of a supportive community that is central to academic life (Deem, 1998). Some members of the Business Faculty also expressed that there appeared more opportunity to socialize with Business Faculty members outside of school. There were more drinking parties and research events held, which brought a sense of network and bonding between the faculty. It is argued that when faculty members spend more time together, they mutually reinforce each other's perceptions. This facet of the Business Faculty was compared to the different character and culture observed in the Humanities Faculty, where they were observed as being not as approachable, have less interaction on a social basis and thus, fewer opportunities for sensemaking. This institutional context doesn't encourage conversation. These limited opportunities for interaction also meant that there was little time to engage in retrospective analysis of the situation. Some respondents stated that the actual research interview was the first opportunity they had had to reflect on the accreditation procedure. Therefore, it is a hard to justify that sensemaking was a fluid process. There is insufficient data to reconstruct past events and the institution seems to quickly 'forget' past events.

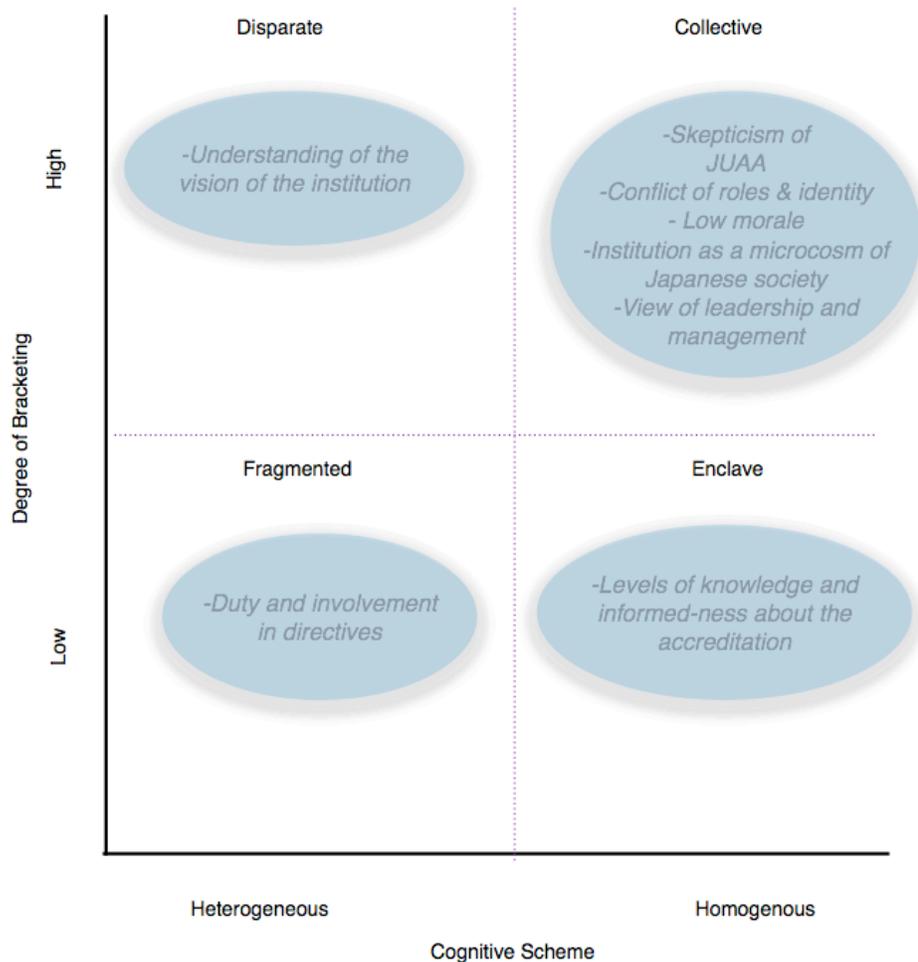
Finally, Weick argues that sensemaking is driven by plausibility. In this instance, it is

assumed that faculty member's beliefs were verified by their own experiences not by objective means. Yet, many faculty members had no knowledge of the accreditation procedures, as they hadn't been directly affected and so they were unable to make sense of it and were not required to come to come to terms with it.

**RQ2: How does this instance correspond with and illuminate Ericson's (2001) conceptual framework for understanding strategic change?**

This study has considered the sensemaking processes among the faculty of a Japanese HE institution undergoing accreditation and change. Figure 7.2 shows the types of meaning achieved by members of faculty at the case university. It has emerged that faculty found it difficult to develop a shared understanding of the accreditation process as they had a heterogeneous cognitive profile in a similar manner to the management team examined in Ericson's (2001) study.

**Figure 7.2: Ericson's Framework at the Case Study University**



Shared meanings and purpose are supposed to be the outcome of sensemaking as they help to articulate the agenda of the institution. In many respects, the respondents, although they didn't agree on the accreditation procedure and change happening within the organization, they had a collective recognition that issues were of relevance to the institution as a whole, which helped to define the organizational identity. Thus, norms and expectations are expressed. When the messages from the JUAA and Chairman are

equivocal, shared meanings among the faculty help to reduce ambiguity among them, yet when the external messages are unequivocal the shared meanings among the faculty can help with understanding expectations.

Collective meaning was present in the way in which faculty viewed senior management (top right quadrant of figure 7.2); they shared certain beliefs, values and understanding there was some 'overlap' (Lindell, Ericson and Melin, 1998). Their bracketing degree was high sharing meaning regarding their skepticism of the JUAA, and their identity and roles within the organization. Within the group they view the accreditation procedures as meaningless and an example of *tatema*.

The faculty members and senior management also displayed examples of disparate meaning where the bracketing degree of the group was high and the cognitive profile heterogeneous: the vision of the university (top left quadrant of figure 7.2).

They also displayed fragmentary meaning, where there is heterogeneous cognitive profile and the bracketing degree is low, when attaching meaning to duties and individual involvement in directives (bottom left quadrant of figure 7.2).

Finally, examples of enclave meaning was seen through the way individuals expressed their levels of knowledge and informed-ness about the accreditation procedure (bottom right quadrant of figure 7.2). This supports Ball's (1987) argument that, 'an assumption of consensus...has extremely limited validity in almost all types of organizations' (p.11).

In this study there were some faculty members who, when they were informed about the process by those who they felt most comfortable and familiar with, did not feel threatened; they embraced change and they sought to gain more knowledge about the process. While some respondents made meaning based on feeling bewildered, disconcerted and disconnected others were seeking collegiality and collaboration. Faculty members' desire to achieve coherence during the accreditation is reflected in their search for identity.

By applying Ericson's framework, we can see that the ultimate identity of those members is unable to be clearly determined. Yet, when faculty shared the ways they make sense of the process of accreditation and change it could be suggested that there was an increase in their self-esteem when they appeared to offload some degree of stress during the interviews. As 'people are not likely to instigate or initiate a process that fundamentally threatens their own self-definition (Fiol & O'Connor, 2002:537) the opportunity to express their opinions during the interviews in this research allowed them the freedom to explore their orientations towards the changes and accreditation. As Brown and Humphreys (2003) state, 'change in organizations is at least in part, constituted by alterations in people's understanding, encoded in narratives, and shared in conversations' (p.121). This study explores to what extent people have shared their understanding showing how they have made sense of the accreditation.

Continuing to relate back to the literature in Chapter 2 and focusing on Anderson (2008) and Kezar (2001), this research shows that the case university is not change-capable. On the surface, it may appear the university is but the results of the interviews show that they are not. The university appears it is unable to promote self-discovery. Despite laying the groundwork for change, the institution does not appear to have been able to combine their traditions with their vision; in other words, they are unable to connect the change process to individual and institutional identity. The observation that universities are being run as corporations can be clearly seen in this case while the interviews clearly described the internal power imbalances that occur within an institution. My research supports those that disagree with the effectiveness of accreditation procedures in Japan (Goodman, 2001; Shore and Wright, 1999; Eades, 2000).

In conclusion, Ericson's work was deemed useful for application to a Japanese HE context as first, it enabled us to explore what was happening at both an individual and collective level within the institution and second, it involved empirical fieldwork, which was longitudinal and social constructivist in approach.

### 7.3. The JUAA in Higher Education in Japan

Through the process of this research I have asked myself many questions about change and the purpose of the accreditation procedure; what does change in higher education actually mean? Is it that people and the organization are changing? That times are changing? Can and does accreditation bring about change? How does the institution know whether or not it has successfully changed and can the institution and individuals reflect on and learn from the change? The JUAA accreditation procedure model can be likened to the process of sensemaking; it is calling on the institution and individuals to understand their identity, understand and react to their environment, socially interact with each other, note cues around them, look retrospectively and it is ongoing. A successful pass in the accreditation is when sensemaking occurs. So although accreditation is a yes/no decision (Woodhouse, 1999), the university in this case study simply passed but with recommendations which indicate the differing levels of sensemaking and shared meaning occurring. The evidence of 'write-ups' (DeVries, 1997) for the purpose of compliance also indicates the arbitrary nature of the process. I conclude that accreditation of HE institutions in Japan is a process that is intended to improve the quality of the institution to better establish the institution within the domestic and global HE market. Yet, little is understood about the Japanese procedures in other parts of the world. The standards are pre-determined and the institution has a duty to meet those standards. Since the JUAA places so much emphasis on peer-review and faculty involvement, the institution needs a clear culture of collaboration, trust and support already established to benefit from the JUAA model. Yet, as can be seen through this study, the value of the JUAA and procedure is contested among faculty. If the institution does not have this type of culture before the accreditation procedure, how can it be nurtured and effective after the process? Whereas some view accreditation as a managerial responsibility, the JUAA place the onus on the institution and faculty as a whole to make sense of their own institution. Therefore, enthusiastic participation is expected from all faculty members. A successful accreditation procedure has the potential to increase the institution's social capital and internal collegiality. By developing this kind of community of practice within the institution, as the JUAA is

attempting to do, the institution can engage in positive change. Ericson (2001) argued that groups and organizations can develop meanings that are disparate and collective. He stated, in agreement with Alvesson (1993), that different identities and cultures can exist in an organization at the same time. In the case university in this thesis, the management team, similar to Ericson's study, revealed a disparate meaning. Using Weick and Ericson in the Japanese experience highlights the importance of understanding the processual view of change and the relevance of not separating it from the planning view of change. It helps to better understand the formulation and implementation of change. Using Weick and Ericson together also highlights and recognizes the interwoven nature of intentional and unintentional change through QA. The research revealed that members of the case university should be treated as active translators of the planned strategies created by top management and the accreditation procedure (p.110) and that by using a sensemaking perspective combined with applying Ericson's framework, our knowledge of change can be enhanced and our understanding of QA in Japan can be better understood.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusions

### 8.1. Limitations

The findings of this study should be taken and interpreted cautiously, particularly as there are a relatively limited number of participants and only one case. More work is needed on how accreditation is seen by other stakeholders. As can be seen from Figure 7.1, there are many stakeholders involved and this research presents only a small fraction of how sense is made of change and accreditation. Also the reluctance of senior management and the JUAA to be interviewed resulted in a rich source of data being untapped.

Secondly, the move in education towards issues of accountability and the future of consumerism has led to a fear of litigation and a culture of untrustworthiness among educational professionals. The need and demand for standardized feedback by external stakeholders puts academics at risk and as such they are seeking protection. Universities are under pressure to ‘manage’ data – lower failure rate so we need to question the entire accreditation culture and the growing culture of accountability and how much data was ‘managed.’ This is something we will never know.

### 8.2. Developments During the Write-up

#### 8.2.1. The Case University

The writing of this thesis has inevitably taken much time as such, during this time, because of the dynamic nature of organizations, a number of significant changes have occurred at the institution in this study. Restructuring of the institution is deemed necessary to adapt to the challenges of new global conditions (Sporn, 1999) and as such the university has changed - the faculty, and in this university the centers, have become administrative and organizational units.

One major change was that since April 2012, a major change was seen in the management of the centers of the university. As outlined in Chapter 5.1, at the time of the study the ‘centers’ did not hold faculty meetings (*kyojyukai*); yet, upon request of the Chairman from each center now has a *faculty* meeting and former faculty from the Business and Humanities faculty have been told whether or not they will remain as *faculty* of those faculty or become a ‘center’ faculty. This is somewhat confusing as the argument is if a center is not a faculty then it does (should) not have a faculty meeting. In reality, it has a center meeting that now includes full-time, tenured faculty members who make these meetings more legitimate. Many respondents see this as a demotion of sorts as in their thinking, a ‘center’ position is firstly, less tangible and secondly a center is more susceptible to being closed than a faculty if the finances of the university become perilous. Despite the centers appearing to have a more concrete position administratively when looking at an organizational chart, the decision making process remains the same. Essentially, it could be concluded that despite change for the sake of ticking a box, the more things change, the more they remain the same at the very heart of the institution.

Secondly, April 2012 saw a dramatic drop in freshmen enrollment of almost 50%. As a result, the Chairman made somewhat of a knee-jerk reaction to dramatically overhaul the make-up of the university. This decision was described by faculty as being made out of desperation and was not part of the whole academic structure nor has it been well thought out or even properly implemented. From April 2013, the previous Faculty of Humanities (which consisted of the Department of Human Science and the Department of International Communication) will now be split, creating a new ‘Faculty of Global’ (this is a direct translation of the Japanese) and ‘Faculty of Human Science’. In short there are now three faculties within the institution. This has caused much upheaval and could be said to make a mockery of the accreditation procedure, as no sooner had the university received accredited status, and the administration dramatically changed the structure of the institution. The university must continue to submit reports to the JUA and MEXT as part of the follow-up process, but at the time of writing, full permission to open the new faculty had not been granted (despite publicity materials and open campus events promoting the aforementioned new department).

Thirdly, in October 2012, at the faculty meeting it was announced that from April 2013, the power of the chairman would further increase through two new amendments to the university constitution. First, currently, in order to be elected, the chairman needs to achieve two-thirds of the vote to maintain his position. This rule has now been amended to state that the candidate now needs only 50% of the vote to be granted the position. Second, as was described in Chapter 6, a chairman, president and vice president run the university. From April 2013, when the current president retires, instead of opening recruitment for a new president, the current chairman will take this role, thus increasing his sphere of influence on the management of the institution.

Fourth, the chairman has set up a working group with a vision to changing the entire university structure from a four year university (with three faculty) to a small liberal arts college, based on a model of such institutions in the U.S. and has begun sending faculty on fact finding missions. This is due to a very recent trend in Asia of universities developing this model.

Finally, a working group has also been set up to plan a new all-English immersion program that will be a four-year university degree conducted entirely in English to begin in 2014.

As can be seen from these recent changes, the university is in a state of turmoil. There are fears that it will not be able to survive the dramatic changes in Japan, especially in regard to the declining student population pool. Dramatic efforts and new programs are being made to find the answer to declining student numbers. It is a worrying situation, as on the surface, maybe it appears that the case university is change-capable, but this research has shown that under the surface, faculty members are dubious of change, demotivated and lack confidence in the leadership of the institution.

### **8.2.2. Japanese University Governance**

Towards the end of the write-up of this enquiry, the chairman handed out a document from an academic advising group *Keizai Doyukai* to all faculty members. The paper documented changes, challenges and recommendations for university governance. As can be seen in this research, the university chairman, department heads all have differing perspectives on the nature of university governance yet, the document details that there are ideal models for governance at each level; bureaucratic level (top management), departmental and decentralized faculty level. Despite the governance recommendations suggesting smooth governance, the reality in this case university is that within this private university, the university chairman is often opposed to the recommendations and suggestions from the other levels of governance.

### **8.3. Personal Reflections**

This research enquiry has been an extremely emotional journey in no small part due to experiencing the devastating 2011 natural disasters in Japan. Post-disaster, my research was a place to seek comfort and a way of being able to function. It helped establish the ‘new normal’ and I feel that the dialogue the study ignited amongst my colleagues and fellow professionals helped me to truly believe in and stand behind my work.

There are however, a number of issues that I would address differently if I were to do such a study again. Firstly, it would have been beneficial to conduct a second set of interviews in 2013. This would enable me to better understand the impact of the accreditation from a longitudinal perspective, yet due to time constraints, this was not possible. Secondly, I would expand the study to include administration staff to get a fuller picture of how the procedure affected all employees of the institution. Thirdly, Weick (2007) observed that richness in case study research ‘may lie in the eye of the beholder;’ yet, case studies do not control the context (Yin, 1994). They are a means of studying real-life settings and the phenomena within them, where the boundaries between such phenomena and the context are blurred (Stake, 1995, Yin, 1994). Frahm and

Brown's (2004), work on dialogic and monologic communication during change could have proved a useful means of examining the change communication in the case university. Yet, although I did not utilize the terms monologic and dialogic, I still think the research presents quite a holistic interpretation of the situation with the use of extensive document analysis and interviews. It may be a path to follow in the future.

Finally, as my background lies in language studies, I think I could have provided a richer account of the institution had I employed a narrative analysis to the project. As a researcher who feels somewhat comfortable interpreting and analyzing what people say and how and why they say it, I regret not utilizing faculty 'stories' about their experiences as a narrative framing the change. People use stories to relieve stress and this was seen in the interviews. As such, these narrative devices could have provided the basis of a great study.

#### **8.4. Conclusions about Japanese higher education**

This case has highlighted significant issues with the decision-making processes and managerial structure of an institution highlighting the way in which the institution follows many private sector management practices. Institutions around the world, not only in Japan, are exhibiting characteristics of New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991). This can especially be seen in the management practices borrowed from the private sector in Japanese HE (Goldspink, 2007; Teichler, 2003). The research has provided further examples of how a Japanese private university displays characteristics of a private corporation. One striking feature of this is the bureaucratic nature of the institution. The importance of the hierarchical authority structure and emphasis on impersonal relationships are made clear through the respondent interviews. The hierarchical structure stresses the vertical relationships within organizations along with the way in which leaders are accountable to external organizations such as the JUA and MEXT. It is hoped that this research will allow researchers outside Japan to gain a better understanding of how private HE institutions are run like private corporations.

## **8.5. Conclusions about the accreditation process**

The number of universities going through the accreditation procedure conducted by the JUAA has continued to grow. In 2011 the JUAA conducted accreditation procedures at 30 universities and involved over 200 evaluators (JUAA). In FY2011, they granted accreditation status to 27 universities and three universities were given limited status, which means they are to improve problem areas. This research enquiry has served to provide a deeper understanding of the process of accreditation in Japanese higher education and the way in which academics make sense of the process and associated change. Based on the evidence from my research, it is clear to see that despite the best efforts of the JUAA to encourage reflection and growth within the institution, faculty are still far from convinced of the purpose and benefits of going through an accreditation procedure. Despite the accreditation calling for a more cooperative model of self-study, the managerial approach to making decisions related to the accreditation was conducted by senior management without collaboration with faculty themselves. Although many faculty were responsible for contributing to the reports to be submitted, they stated they had little direct involvement (Middlehurst and Elton, 1992) and that in some cases, they didn't even contribute as they felt it to be a waste of their time and energy. Ericson (2001) states that to be a strategist means being involved in all aspects of the organization in times of change. The JUAA examiners are attempting to encourage and implement change through the accreditation; yet, it is the senior management team within the university that need to be key strategists, involving the whole organization in the process. Ericson argued that collective meaning is needed to accomplish successful organizational change. In this thesis, the institution did not ascertain collective meaning.

As can be seen from the documents produced by the JUAA, the whole accreditation process is dependent on all people within the institution making collective sense of the procedure:

When constructing an internal quality assurance system, it is important to clarify goals and plans, share these with constituent members, make diligent efforts to

realize these goals and plans, and steadily improve quality based on appropriate feedback from checks/evaluations and reform. (JUAA Handbook p.4)

They continually ask in documentation, ‘do the constituent members thoroughly share understanding?’ Yet, as can be seen through the interviews, there is a limited shared understanding and collective sensemaking. The way that members understand the organization could be thought of as an outcome of the sensemaking process, and thus, in terms of the JUAA expectations, the results are disappointing. There were not enough creative measures taken to raise awareness and share views; nor were there enough incentives to enhance individual efforts that provided opportunities to develop a true learning organization, in the style the JUAA advocates in its self-study review approach. McGill and Slocum (1993:16) observed that building a learning organization requires leaders to ‘develop employees who see their organization as a system,’ and in this instance, they did not.

If the mission of the JUAA is to foster a continuing culture of change and improvement in the institution, there is a need for increased opportunities for the faculty and administration to engage in more group activities where they work solving problems and discussing more openly and frankly their thoughts and opinions. This process should not continue indefinitely and should be well managed in order for action to take place. If there is a better understanding of the sensemaking that is going on among faculty, receptivity to change can be better harnessed. Referring back to section 5.2 and the JUAA’s 10 standards for accreditation, it appears that at the case institution, the majority of faculty members feel that Standard 10 has not been achieved. They express disappointment with the status quo and frustration that the accreditation has not fostered a positive culture within the institution.

After observing the procedure and the sensemaking among faculty and after reflecting on the research in Chapter 2, I conclude that a quality assurance system, like the JUAA accreditation procedure, should have the following characteristics:

- ✓ QA systems should assign roles to **all** faculty during the procedure and should make everyone's responsibilities explicit;
- ✓ QA systems should take more precautions against write-ups;
- ✓ QA systems should focus on *Kaizen*; the concept of continuous improvement;
- ✓ QA systems should be transparent and free from bias, ensuring that those responsible for completing internal tasks relating to the accreditation are not overly influenced by politics and hierarchal relationships within the institution;
- ✓ QA systems should ensure that communication channels should be clear and this will assist in encouraging all faculty members to willingly participate;
- ✓ QA systems should clearly communicate the philosophy of the approach to quality;
- ✓ QA systems should examine levels of trust within the organization.

Since the start of this thesis, a team of researchers in Japan published an article on university accreditation in Japan, as a comparative study with the US process (Mulvey, Winskowskib, 2011). Although this is a comprehensive explanation of the system in Japan, it lacks the depth of a study such as this, which has explored the situation on the ground, from a participant perspective. I also doubt the real ability for education systems outside Japan to fully accept and be able to implement the full *Kaizen* style accreditation procedures. What my research has shown is that despite the time taken to create these evaluation procedures, when they are conducted in an institution, depending on the culture of the institution, they may not be as effective as Mulvey, et.al. (2011) predict.

It is hoped that this research will be beneficial to academics and researchers in QA and within institutions experiencing an accreditation procedure to help them better understand the challenges associated with sensemaking, accreditation and change, as those involved in such accreditation procedures must learn how to create and sustain an organizational context and culture for successful and effective change.

## 8.6. Conclusions about the institution and change

Based on this research, the literature and above discussion, I can conclude that the future of the case-study university is uncertain, possibly even unsustainable. The lack of morale, the demotivation of key employees and the suggestion that some faculty members saw the accreditation as just going through the motions, indicate that in the current economy and declining birthrate situation in Japan, this case university will struggle to survive. Table 8.6 below reflects on the university's ability to change, in relation to Scott, Coates and Anderson's (2008) list of principles for 'change-capable' universities.

**Table 8.6: Reflections on the ability of the case university to change based on the literature**

Characteristics	Case University
Undefensive	The case university is undefensive to some extent, yet, evidence of write ups during the process and details of 'saving face' expressed in the interviews shows a level of defensiveness
Evidence-based	Theoretically it should be as the accreditation calls for this yet it did not appear to be during the process
Able to set priorities	The accreditation procedure helped the university to set priorities. The university was forced to complete the steps of prioritizing in order to pass.
Able to make hard decisions	Yes, top management appeared able to make such decisions but middle-level managers did not, respondents stated that middle level managers were drained of energy and lacked

	power to be able to make decisions.
Able to make clear who is responsible for what	The accreditation reports had the names of faculty members and their positions listed next to their responsibilities yet, the interviews show that in reality, not everyone was informed and involved and there were write-ups made by senior managers in order to get the job done.
Acknowledge that all staff have a role to play	Again, in the accreditation reports, this was seen but the interviews showed that not all staff felt they had a role and that they were not acknowledged enough by top management.
Focused on outcomes	Yes, this was clear through the process.
Able to ensure that complex, hierarchical approval systems are only used when justified	According to the interview records, the hierarchal approval systems were used extensively and not only when necessary due to the Japanese management structure,
Able to ensure all meetings are justified	The interviews showed that some faculty felt that not all meetings were justified; even referencing ‘ <i>tate-mae</i> ’ a Japanese expression for doing things on the outside different to the inside.
Operating in a responsive, collaborative and team-based fashion	No, this was not apparent. Referring to Weick and Ericson’s theories, there was a lack of collaboration and pockets of collectiveness were not operating responsively.
Able to make things work by trialing	Changes were introduced in a reactive way; new initiatives and processes were started in haste to meet targets so there was there was no opportunity to trial things. Some times it

	appeared like unplanned change for some faculty, not incremental.
Strategically networked	Yes, the university is strategically networked, particularly with the administrative side of the Ministry of Education and the JUAA, but it lacks strategic networks within the university itself.

In this case, the JUAA called for an incremental change, where the accreditation cycle laid out in their documents called for continuous improvement as part of the quality management process. In conjunction with a planned change, a strategic plan devised by the internal committee was implemented to accomplish the change. This thesis supports Ericson's (2001) recognition of the interwoven nature of intentional and unintentional change. This thesis shows that members of organizations should be treated as active translators of the planned strategies created by top management (p.110) and that by using a sensemaking perspective our knowledge of change can be enhanced if we focus on the way individuals make meaning and make sense of their organizational life (p.111) unintentional change is explored.

No one wants to see an educational institution fail yet the reality is clear; private universities in Japan are vulnerable. In an era where Japanese universities are going bankrupt, universities are merging and unprecedented university public relations campaigns are dominating the media, there is a fear that a university such as the case-study university, with internal struggles and what appears to be poor management and a lack of coherent sensemaking will eventually fold. On the surface, the accreditation procedure may have appeared to be a successful endeavor, yet this study uncovered the tensions that have occurred as a result of the process, resulting in an internal structure that does not inspire confidence for a successful future.

## 8.7. Indications about the literature

Referring back to section 2.2.4, this research does show how change is impacted by institutional process and the behavior of those in the institution (Meyer, Scott and Deal, 1981; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The university in this case study does exhibit the characteristics of Cohen et. al's (1976) 'organized anarchy.' The senior management team here hold power and engage in decision making but the rest of the faculty do not feel involved in these decisions. During the accreditation and change it was clear to see that people sought to 'construct a narrative' that enabled them to 'make sense of and cope with complexity and ambiguity' (Cairns & Beech, 2003:179). This process of sensemaking is ongoing and cannot be controlled by the Chairman of the institution. It is clear however, that the university senior management can 'seek to have a major influence on the interpretations' of the events (Dunford & Jones, 2000:1208). Additionally, although this study was not primarily focused on sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) it appeared to be occurring. The senior management team played an important part in the interpretation of events. The hierarchical nature of the HE institution influences the nature of the involvement of senior school managers as it was expressed that those in middle management positions felt that they didn't share the 'same level of consciousness of corporate strategy as top managers' (Rouleau, 2005: p.1416).

The nature of communication in this context is all about creating meaning, whether that be shared or unshared. 'How organization members acquire, organize and make sense of changes in the environment is a key to understanding organizational change' (Weber & Manning, 2001:228). In institutions that undergo change, the true communication of change is not as structured as research sometimes suggests. As Mills (2003) ascertained, the 'given' of change is not always reflected in the literature on change. As the effect of sensemaking is rather unexplored (Mills, 2003), this research has attempted to highlight the individual sensemaking that occurs during accreditation procedures and change.

The concepts of shared knowledge and shared ambiguity in this study that despite some researchers suggesting that ambiguity is sometimes preferred in Japan (Hotta, 2012), the

results show that ambiguity and uninformedness resulted in low morale and frustration among faculty members. There was much ambiguity surrounding the intention of the change, the purpose and peoples' roles in the change.

Through the accreditation procedure the institution must develop the capabilities to take an open systems approach, as it must adapt to the changing external conditions to be effective and in the long term, survive. Understanding organizations is almost impossible if the manager is 'wed to a single, narrow perspective' (Bolman and Deal, 1984: p.4), which was implied by respondents in this study. As such, becoming a reflexive practitioner and using multiple vantage points to better understand what is happening can be an effective means to better understanding the institution. This research provides somewhat of a diagnostic reading of the accreditation situation and hopefully contributes to the field a critical evaluation and exposition of the significance of the way that faculty interpret the process.

To conclude, the complex challenges of HE management and the facilitation of organizational change within institutions are hard to make sense of. The decision to combine the theoretical constructs of Weick (1995) and Ericson (2001) allowed us to see how the institution, society and culture were woven together into sensemaking. As Scott (1995) stated 'no organization can properly be understood apart from its wider social and cultural context' (151). In Weick's work, identity can answer one key sensemaking question — *who am I?* — but using an additional framework such as Ericson's we can answer the additionally important question of *what is going on here?* This research has done what Hora (2008) has suggested: explored a cognitive approach to change finding that neatly bounded culture does not exist in HE institutions. The study shows that HE institutions are facing complex internal challenges and struggles independent of external accreditation procedures and as such, many different types of meaning are taking place. Consequently, organizational change and accreditation is indeed a complex and 'messy' business (Berg, 1979) in higher education.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Dear Colleague,

As you may be aware, I have been working on my Doctorate of Education at the University of Bath since 2007. Throughout that time I have been engaged in research in the field of Educational Management and Leadership. Papers written towards the award of Doctorate of Education have included work on Japanese higher education policy, the internationalization of Japanese higher education, branding and marketing of higher education in Japan and most recently educational research methods in educational leadership and management.

My final piece of doctoral work is concerned with accreditation, specifically accreditation carried out by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) and changes associated with it. Since 2009 I have been carefully following the accreditation procedure that the case university has been engaged in and I have been examining it from the perspective of accountability, international standards, and organizational behavior. I would like to conclude my studies by speaking with those faculty and staff who have experienced accreditation in order to ascertain the purpose, and influence of accreditation on higher education in Japan and how it affects institutions. It is hoped this research will contribute to the debate in the wider research community of educational management. As such, I am writing to ask if you would be so kind as to sit and discuss accreditation with me for approximately 30-45 minutes, at a time convenient with you. The subject of the discussion will be accreditation and change in Higher Education. Discussions will be held in either English or Japanese (or a combination of both).

If you are able to assist me in my research please contact me via email at  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

and let me know what days/times of the week are most convenient for a meeting and what language you would prefer to use. On completion of this study I will happily provide you with feedback on my findings. In doing this you will enable me to contribute to the growing body of research in higher education management.

Thank you for your support in advance. I look forward to the possibility of talking with you about

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Louisa Birchley

*Faculty of Business Administration*

*(Case University)*

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

### 1. Introduction

- ▶ Explain to the respondent the purpose of the interview and thank them for their time.
- ▶ Explain why respondent was selected.
- ▶ Explain the logistics of the interview (length of time, seek recording permission, anonymity).
- ▶ Ask if the respondent has any questions.

### 2. Interview Questions

The university has recently undergone an accreditation under the direction of the JUAA. My research is concerned with examining change in higher education and how we make sense of change during these times.

*1. Can you think of a particular incident you have experienced or a particular change that you have had to implement or have been affected by over the past two years, either positive or negative?*

*2. Who was involved?*

*- Do you usually work with these people on a daily basis?*

*3. When did it take place?*

*4. Did it influence the way that you view the school / management / the accreditation procedure?*

*5. What did this incident or change tell you about the school?*

\*Repeat question one until there are no further responses or until the time is up.

### 3. Concluding the Interview

- ▶ Thank the respondent and explain how and when they can access data related to this project. Explain how to contact me if necessary and again reinforce anonymity.
- ▶ Ask again if the respondent has any questions
- ▶ Thank the respondent.
- ▶ Give small token of appreciation and offer to help with any proof-reading projects, etc in future

## APPENDIX 3: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND PARTICIPANT CONSENT

The university has recently undergone an accreditation under the direction of the JUAA. My research is concerned with examining change in higher education and how we make sense of change during these times. Thank you very much for assisting me in this research. This research is part of my doctoral studies and all information will remain confidential and anonymous. Neither your name nor the university name will be divulged at any stage of the research. I will also ask that this interview be audio recorded for clarity and analysis purposes.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could personally link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility after completion of the study. After the storage time and after the degree has been finally awarded, the information gathered will be destroyed. If at any point in the interview you feel uncomfortable with the line of questioning and or would not like to answer a question, please say immediately. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the researcher. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study. A full transcript/notes taken during this study will be available for you after the study and comments and critical feedback is welcomed.

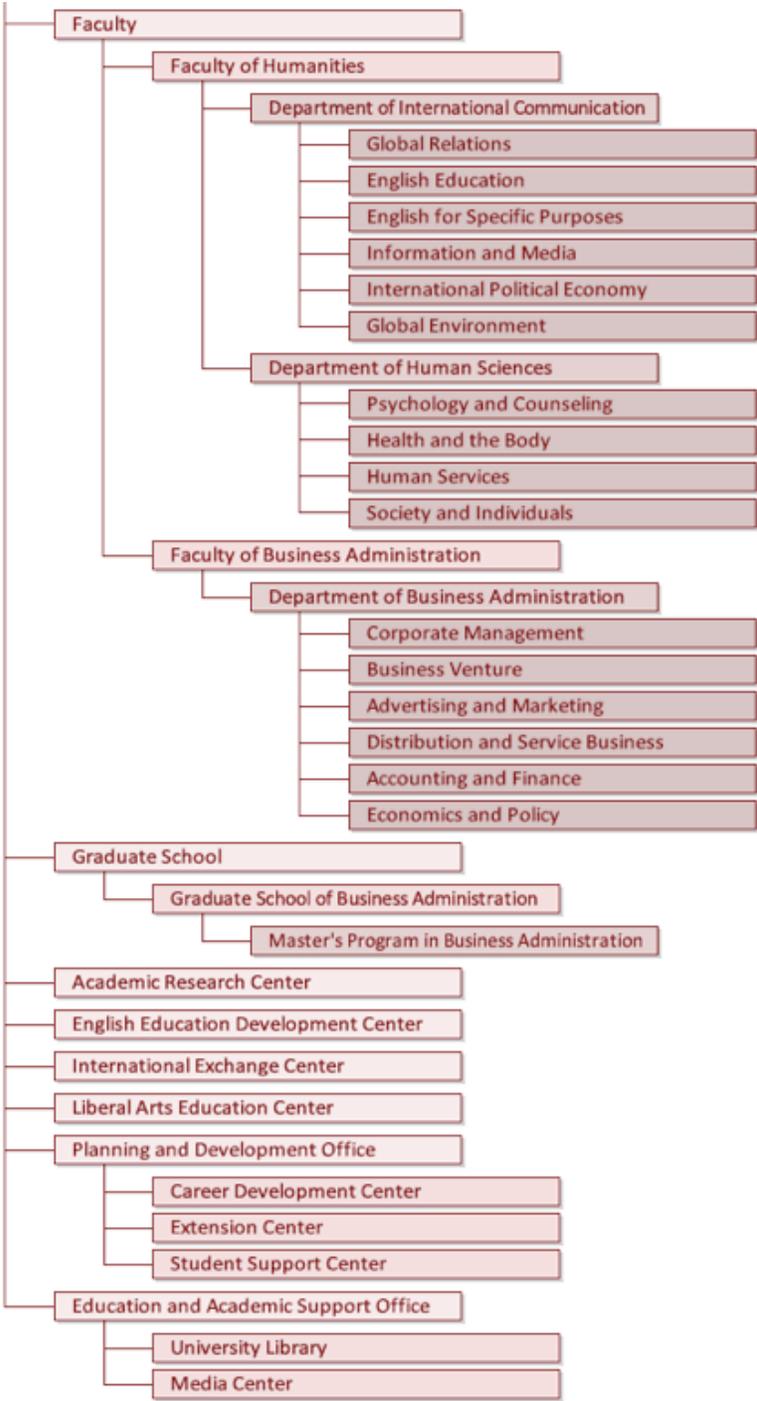
**PARTICIPANT CONSENT:** Please sign below to confirm that you have read the above points, that you will allow / disallow an audio recording to be taken, and that you agree to participate in this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 4: UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE (as of March 2012)



**APPENDIX 5: DIAGRAM OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR  
UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION PRACTICE  
(JUAH Handbook)**

