

# Japanese Public Administration and its Adaptation to New Public Management

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## **Abstract:**

*The aim of this paper is to examine the current state of the Japanese Public Administration(JPA). In recent years, some Japanese scholars acknowledge the movement of the New Public Management (NPM) introduced to Japan by business consultants, but they have done little research on impacts of the NPM on the JPA. I claim that practitioners in the JPA still predominantly take an approach of public choice theory, showing no intention of rectifying the JPA for the purpose of advancing administrative reforms.*

First, this study, while adopting typologies B. G. Peters and V. Wright proposed in 1996, will identify the state of the JPA. The second part will bring the above typological abstract into concrete and descriptive issues by analyzing the current experiences of administrative reforms by the Japanese government. These reforms under investigation will include the introduction of the Administrative Independent corporations (Dokuritu Gyousei Houjin) and the Policy Evaluation System (Gyousei Hyouka Seido) for the Japanese central government.

The JPA is in transition yet still showing the strong ability of the Japanese bureaucracy to preserve itself. However, is the JPA really converging with the standards of administrative management in North America and Western Europe for the foreseeable future? In my opinion, yes, it is. Nonetheless, the process is painfully slow. The gradual emergence of popular public pressures that thoroughly permeate the state administration will hold politicians responsive to the need of citizens, and in turn for their electoral success, politicians will hold bureaucrats accountable for citizens. The accountability of the JPA will provide Japanese civil society with a strong foundation.

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to examine the current state of the Japanese Public Administration (JPA). In recent years, some Japanese scholars acknowledge the movement of the New Public Management (NPM)(see, Pollitt, 2002) introduced to Japan

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by business consultants (Ueyama, 1998, 1999), but they have done little research on impacts of the NPM on the JPA. In the Annual Meeting of 2000 for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Society for Public Administration, Kuniaki Tanabe (professor of University of Tokyo) was unable to answer his own question whether JPA can survive in the 21 Century in spite of a challenge of New Public Management or not (Tanabe, 2001).

Therefore, for responding to this crucial question, it is important for refounding JPA to promote comparative studies of PA in the developed countries. At present, according to Masaru Nishio (emeritus professor of University of Tokyo)(1993), the distinctive feature of JPA after W. W. II can be characterized as a discipline with three fields : institution, policy and management. Although he strongly suggests keeping it from now on, I would claim that individual disciplines of JPA need to develop into more specialized ones such as various administrative ideas with the American political tradition (Kettl,2000, Exhibit 2 (p.29) ; Hori, 2000). Jun (1998) already has suggested that JPA needs to adopt “an interdisciplinary approach.” (p. 180). Considering JPA as a fully undeveloped discipline, I can understand that practitioners in JPA still predominantly take an approach of public choice theory, showing no intention of rectifying the JPA for the purpose of advancing administrative reforms (Administrative Reform Committee, 1996). Namely they still have acknowledged that JPA has been falling behind the times. Therefore NPM seems to be a panacea. However, the following two questions should be answered here. Can JPA earnestly learn from all satisfying and discouraging experiences of NPM reforms? Also, can NPM provide JPA final opportunities for achieving a breakthrough in the state of JPA?

Firstly, this paper attempts to identify the state of JPA by using a typology B. Guy Peters and Vincent Wright proposed (Peters and Wright, 1996). It is pointed out that a traditional Public Administration in many developed countries has six assumptions : self-sufficiency, direct control, uniformity, accountability upward, standardized establishment procedures, and an apolitical service. In Japan, a traditional Public Administration has been transformed by increasing attacks from neo-liberal economists and public choice scholars due to the oil crises in 1973 and 1979 (see, Gyousei Kanri Kihon Mondai Kenkyukai, 1979 ; Interim Government Administration Study Board [Second IASB], 1982). Accordingly, these assumptions of JPA also have been questioned fundamentally in both theory and practice.

Secondly, the NPM-oriented reforms of the Japanese central government are, similarly and differently from leading NPM reforms, illustrated with the Independent Administrative Institutions (IAIs) (Dokuritu Gyousei Houjin) and the Policy Evaluation System (PES) (Gyousei Hyouka Seido). There has been no study that tried to compare Japanese NPM reforms with the other. James’s paper (1999), I will mention later, may be an exception. The research project of Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert (2000) covers central

government reforms of 10 countries, but it does not reach for Japan due to a high barrier of the Japanese language. Needless to say, no study has been carried out by Japanese scholars. They have not exchanged more than a few views with the others.

Therefore, this paper tentatively attempts to provide a view of cross-national comparisons between Japan and the others. At the beginning, I will discuss the following. For one thing, the creation of IAIs means that bureaucrats have an opportunity to use NPM-based skills for administrative reforms under their control. For another, it is said that the full operations of PES legally guarantee to improve the efficiency of IAIs. However PES is placed as SEE in the management circle of PLAN-DO-SEE. Namely, it is equal to the system of self-evaluation served for activities of bureaucrats. Accordingly, it seems that Japanese NPM-oriented reforms are mainly conducted not by politicians, but by bureaucrats. It is a scene that contrasts well with the US, UK, AUS and NZ. Furthermore, concerning the above questions, bureaucrats have limitations of learning from NPM reforms, and have been a serious hindrance to full development of JPA due to their misuse of NPM.

## **2. Identifying the state of the Japanese Public Administration**

Peters and Wright argue that a traditional Public Administration is diversely changing into a new Public Management (Managerialism, NPM, NPR, etc.). In 1990's, JPA is also drastically influenced by experiences and theories of leading countries like the US, UK, AUS and NZ (see OECD,2000).

This paper divides the above six assumptions into structures and functions of public administration based on public bureaucracy. Structures are related to the assumptions of self-sufficiency, direct control, and standardized establishment procedures. Functions include others. Comparative features of both shows in Table 1.

### **2-1 Structures**

Peters and Wright doubt whether an old PA maintains each assumption about structures as follows :

- (A) the contracting-out, privatization and competition have challenged the assumption of self-sufficiency of public administration.
- (B) the idea of so-called "empowerment" of people has attacked the assumption of direct controls from hierarchy.
- (C) the paying for performance and recruitment from the private sector on short-term contracts have eroded the merit system of traditional public service.

In JPA, the claims proposed above in (A) and (C) are accepted in theory and practice. First of all, one such case found in (A) is privatization of national corporations

Table 1 Are the assumptions of a traditional PA changing now? NPM JPA

		NPM	JPA
Structures	(A) Self-sufficiency	Yes	Yes
	(B) Direct contro	Yes	No
	(C) Standardized establishment procedures	Yes	Yes
Functions	(D) Uniformity	Yes	Yes
	(E) Accountability upward	Yes	No
	(F) An apolitical service	Yes	Yes

like 6 Japan Railways Companies (JRs) and Japan Freight Railway Company, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Co. (NTT) and Japan Tobacco Inc. (JT) in 1980's. On August 15 of 2000, the introduction of performance pay system is for the first time recommended by the National Personnel Authority indicating the shift from the seniority system to the true "merit" (business performance) system. On December 25 of 2001, Mr. Koizumi cabinet decided to adopt the Guidelines for Reform of the Public Servant System, which "aimed at achieving fundamental reform of the public servant system from the standpoint of citizens" (Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Action, 2001/12/25). Then he made out a schedule of revising the National Public Service Law as well as the Local Public Service Law in coming sessions of the Diet (Japanese Parliament).

Yet, the idea of "empowerment" in (B) means "an empty promise" in Japanese. It is replaced with the idea of "partnership" between governments and citizens, corporations, NGOs under the control by bureaucrats. Namely, the Japanese idea of "partnerships" thinks of government not as a partner, but as a guardian (Hori, 1998).

In contrast to nation-wide introductions of Total Quality Management (TQM) into business administrations since late 1970's, the topic of TQM applied to public administration has never been discussed by scholars and practitioners (Jun and Koike, 1998). This is because Japanese public bureaucracy has retained great powers of direction, influence and guidance for civil society and economy in spite of so far causing many scandals (Furukawa, 1999 ; Shindo, 2002).

Lately, there is a typical example of bashing up former Foreign Minister Mrs. Makiko Tanaka by news leaks from bureaucrats (Press Conference 5 June 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). She tried to do whole cleaning of the Ministry last year, but she was dismissed from the Minister in January of 2002 by Mr. Koizumi because he cannot pluck up the courage to eradicate corruption in the Ministry.

## 2-2 Functions

Also, Peters and Wright brought into question about each assumptions about functions as follows :

(D) the growth of decentralization and deconcentration changes a concept of

uniformity to the following phrase: “one size fits all may not be adequate in increasingly differentiated societies” (Peters and Wright, 1996: p. 634).

- (E) the introduction of market mechanism and the devolution of implementation to semi-autonomous agencies come to blur the principle of accountability upward to the political sovereign (parliament).
- (F) An apolitical public service, that is, a politically neutral one has been asked by managerialism and “policy actors” (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman 1981).

In JPA, the assertions proposed above in (D), (E) and (F) are admitted in theory and practice. For example, a case in (D) is that 6 JR companies have different fare tables in place of the single table of Japan National Railways. A fare of rural areas and small companies such as JR Kyushu, JR Shikoku and JR Hokkaido are higher than other companies of municipal and competitive areas with private lines.

Another case is that establishing a long-term care insurance system of 2000 shows people a large disparity in monthly premiums between rich and poor local governments under a rigid national guideline of elderly services set by Ministry of Health and Welfare. Elderly people, while paying different service fees to local governments, are provided with the same personal services from them. Japan Association of City Mayors (Zenkoku Shityou Kai) reported on a national survey of all mayors that the maximum of monthly premiums is one and a half times as much as the minimum (Nippon Keizai Shimbun, June 7, 2000). Local governments within the same prefectures have differential premiums: 1.66 times within Fukushima prefecture, 1.34 within Kyoto prefecture (Asahi Shinbun, March 3 and 10, 2000).

Secondly, a well-known case in (E) is that introducing the concept of Independent Administrative Institutions (IAIs) to the central government from the UK started from April 1 of 2001 for national museums and research institutes. And then all national universities are planning to change themselves into IAIs by 2010. However, as we shall see later, it is needed to discuss whether the accountability upward to the Diet legally is working hereafter or not. My answer here is that bureaucracy can finally be held accountable for their actions to the Diet, because JPA is in transition yet still showing the strong ability of bureaucracy to preserve themselves so that they can invent new instruments of control such as the market mechanism and the devolution of implementation. In other words, it seems that words of the accountability for their actions downward to people are used by bureaucrats as a matter of political rhetoric (Hori, 2000: p. 1462).

Furthermore, a case in (F) is, under NPM's influences, showed by the new Law related to the personnel interchange between central government and private companies (Chouseifu to Minkan Kigyou no Jinnji-Kouryu ni Kansuru Houritu, 2000. 3. 21.). It allows that officers of central government have several year of experience in business

executives and vice versa. Dual positions at national universities and private companies are permitted by the confirmation of Mr Obuchi cabinet meeting in November 30 of 1999. And then it still has been annually reported that, for example, the number of “parachuting” from former government officials to counterparts of private companies less than two years after retiring from official positions amounts to 591 people from 1995 to 1999 (National Personnel Authority, 2000; see Inoki, 1995). Accordingly, Japanese people consider bureaucrats as private interest maximizers as opposed to “servants of the whole community” (Article 15 of the Constitution of Japan).

All these things make it clear that JPA is really converging with the standards of administrative management influenced by NPM in North America and Western Europe for the foreseeable future. Christopher Hood (1996) has pointed out that “for the polar type labeled the Japanese way, there would be opportunity but no motive [to make a major shift toward NPM]”(p. 281). However, now JPA certainly has still held both. Whatever motive it has, the process seems to be painfully slow. This is mainly because, as the cases in (B) and (E) provide the evidence, there is a higher ability of Japanese public bureaucracy, which has secured the close cooperation of the conservative ruling parties (LDP, Komei, Hoshu) and big-business circles (the Federation of Economic Organizations, etc.).

### **3. Current experiences of administrative reform**

There are similarities and differences between NPM-oriented reforms in Japan and NPM reforms in North America and Western Europe. These reforms of Japanese central government are typically illustrated with the following examples: the Independent Administrative Institutions (IAIs) (Dokuritu Gyousei Houjin) and the Policy Evaluation System (PES) (Gyousei Hyouka Seido).

#### **3-1 Administrative Independent Institutions**

The idea of IAIs suggested by the Next Step Agency of UK is authorized by the Final Report of the Administrative Reform Council in December 3 of 1997. The creation of IAIs is one of steps for downsizing of the organizations and the number of personnel of the civil service. 56 new IAIs were born in April 1 of 2000 (Table 2). Also, a plan for cutting the number of civil servants by 25% until 2010 enforces 99 national universities into IAIs, of which employees will not be “public servants” with 125,000 full-time positions. But it is noted that “cutting the number” is excluded from the maximum number of civil servants provided by the Total Staff Number Law (So-Teiin Ho), and a remuneration of officers and staff is offered with the fund (Watashiki Koufu Kin) granted by Ministry of Finance as well as ones of special public corporations (Gyousei Soshiki Kenkyu Kai, 2000). Thus, it is pointed out that great efforts of bureaucrats are focused on decreasing the number of

Table 2 Examples of IAIs (their supervising Ministries)

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- IAIs National Archives (Cabinet Office)
  - IAIs National Museum (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)
  - IAIs National Institute of Health and Nutrition (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)
  - IAIs Center for Quality Control and Consumers Service (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)
  - IAIs Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry)
  - IAIs National Traffic Safety and Environment Laboratory (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport)
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Source : Institute of Administrative Management (2001), pp. 88-89.

permanent staff by using the idea of IAIs besides hiring temporary employees after W. W. II (Hayakawa and Simard, 1999).

Central points of both similarities are based on “the principle of a separation of the policy-drafting function from the policy-execution function” (Administrative Reform Council (1997), p. 1088), the financial management by the corporate accounting, and the evaluation by the results of performance.

After the Final Report of the Administrative Reform Council was publicly announced in December of 1997, a government official stressed four differential points between IAIs and the Next Step Agency for explaining IAIs’ superiority (Table 3) (Matsuda, 1999 ; see Okamoto, 2001). And then a researcher of UK characterized IAIs as a ‘soft’ agency in terms of “less recruitment of officials from outside the public sector, less emphasis on an individualized chief executive role, with more elements of consensus and less public performance regimes” (James, 1999 : p. 17). He also believed in IAIs as a variant of Anglo-American agencies with business corporate governance as well as almost all Japanese researchers. However, nobody understands nowadays that IAIs seem to be established not as ‘business-like’ government agencies, but as another type of “Tokushu Houjin” (Special Public Corporations (SPC))<sup>1)</sup> such as JRs, NTT, and JT (Fujita, 1999).

For example, the Maintenance Law for IAIs (November 5, 1999) has no article of a

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1) The definition of “Tokushu Houjin” (Special Public Corporations) is that the Central Government established these corporations authorized by specially individual laws for improving a variety of governmental activities from public works to social welfare (78 corporations, as of July 1, 2000). It is pointed that IAIs have three points of features different from Special Public Corporations, that is, more discretion in implementation, corporate accounting, evaluation (Matsuda, 1999). However, I claim that these features have no guarantee to be more effective for enhancing “independent” status of IAIs. In this point, the opinion is opposite from Gyousei Soshiki Kenkyu Kai (2000, p. 22). The numbers of officers and staff of SPCs amount to 725 full-time positions (206 part-time positions) and 438, 644 full-time positions (Institute of Administrative Management, 2001 : p. 100).

Table 3 Next Step Agency IAIs

Status	Dependent	Independent
Employee	Public	Public (within/out of NPSL)
Evaluating	None	Double
Legal obligation	None	Disclosure

Table 3 (cont.) SPC

Status	Independent
Employee	Public (out of NPSL)
Evaluating	None
Legal obligation	None

Refernce : Matsuda (1999)

\* NPSL=the National Public Service Law

self-supporting accounting system in spite of adopting the corporate accounting. The accounting system of IAIs is based on the principle of balancing between profit and loss decided by the target and plan of performance for a term of 3-5 years, because the annual income of IAIs is transferred from public money (the Study Group for establishing Principles of Accounting for IAIs, 2000 : p. 2)<sup>2)</sup>. Namely, the financial management of IAIs focuses not on profitability, but on efficiency in accordance with the target and plan of performance approved by their supervising Ministers (Okamoto, 2001 ; Nakamura, 1999).

Officials often emphasize that the legal status of IAIs is independent from central government (Matsuda, 1999 ; Okamoto, 2001). The true meaning of “independent status” is that each IAI becomes specially a legal person apart from administrative bodies. However, paradoxically enough, it seems that supervising ministries have legal rights to interfere with total management of IAIs.

Therefore, it is said that the introduction of IAIs into JPA provides bureaucrats an opportunity to put NPM-based skills to the public test.

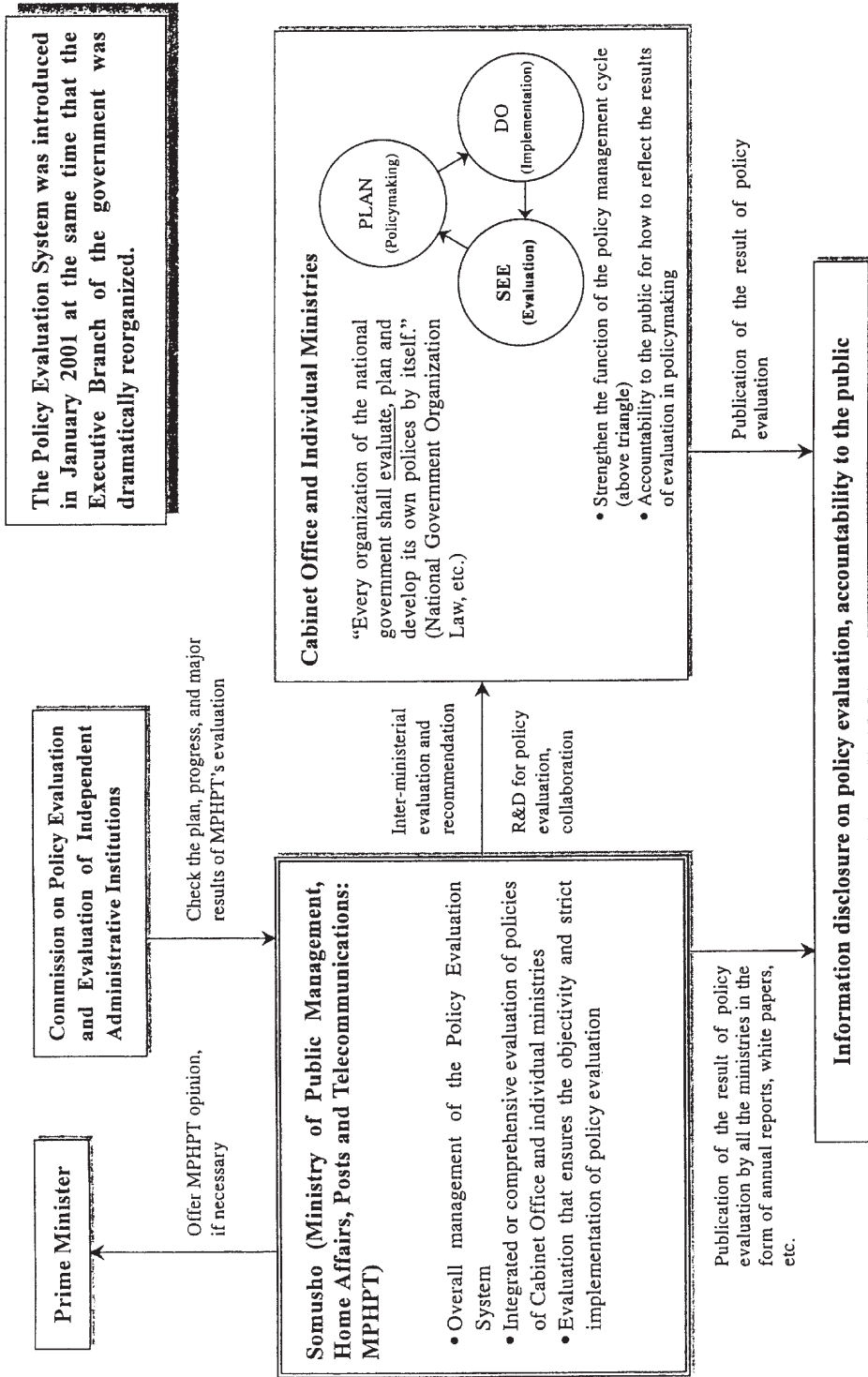
### 3-2 Policy Evaluation System

The Policy Evaluation System (PES) (Gousei Hyouka Seido) is working in Japanese Central Government since January of 2001 (Flow Chart 1). And It is legally authorized by the Government Policy Evaluation Act (GPEA) in April 1 of 2002 (Flow Chart 2).

2) This study group with chairperson of the first parliamentary undersecretary (Soukatu Seimu Jikan) was established by Management and Coordination Agency in 1999.

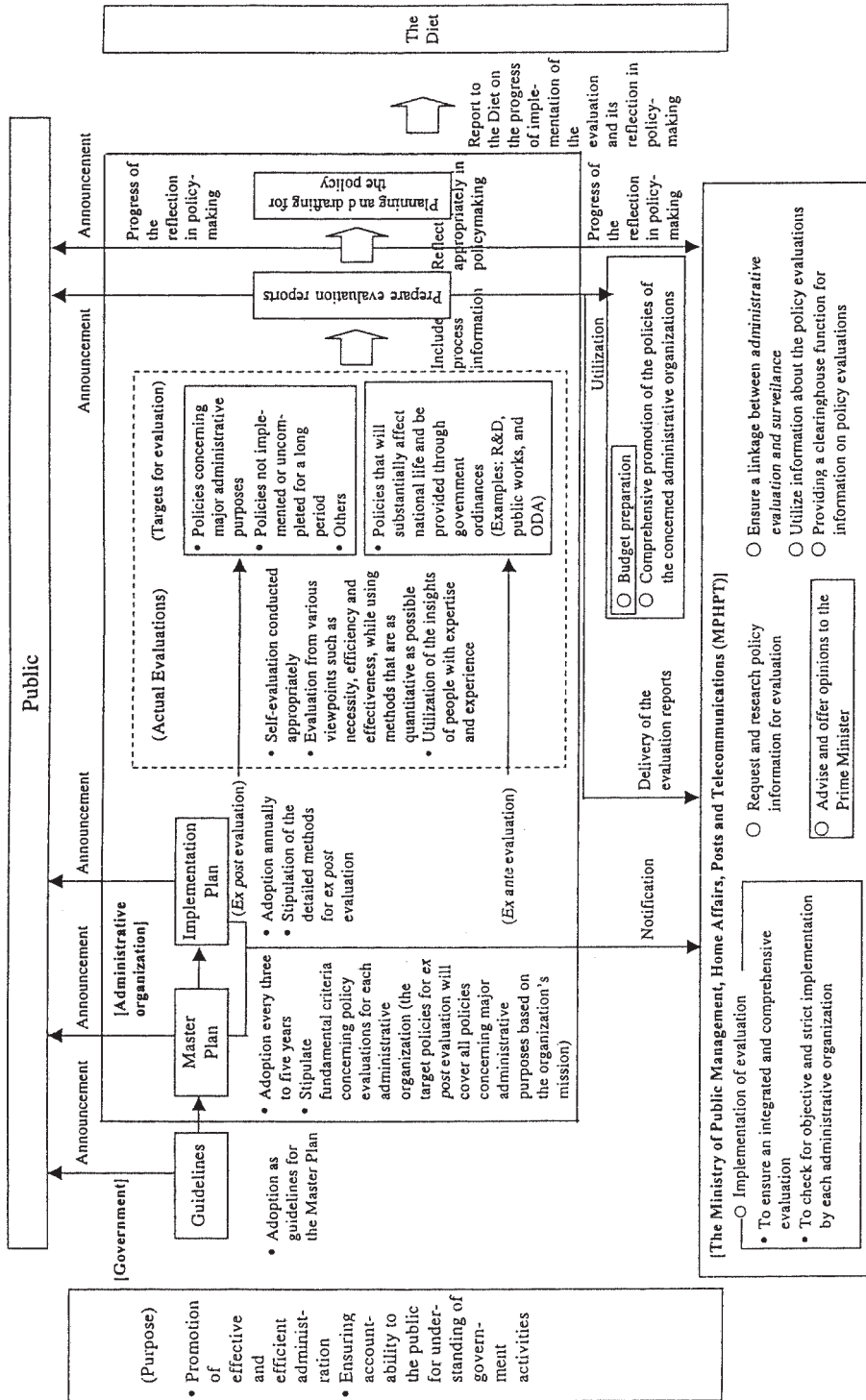


Flow Chart 1 The Function of the Policy Evaluation System



Source: the document entitled "seisaku-Hyouka" (the policy Evaluation System of the Government of Japan), delivered by deputy director for policy evaluation, Mincations of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications.

Flow Chart 2 Outline of the Government Policy Evaluations Act (GPEA)



Source: the document entitled "Government Policy Evaluations Act (GPEA)", delivered by deputy director for policy evaluation, Ministry of public management, Home Affairs, posts and Telecommunications.

### \*Flow Chart 1 & 2

Generally speaking at the second year of PES's operations, it is indicated from Flow Chart 1 that PES, as I mentioned before, is placed as SEE in the management circle of PLAN-DO-SEE. Namely, it is equal to the system of self-evaluation served for the activities of bureaucrats. Further, the Commission on Policy Evaluation and Evaluation of Independent Administrative Institutions (CPEEIAs) is seemingly apart from the governmental body, but it is a subordinate organ of the Ministry of public management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications(MPHPT)(the Article 123 of Law for establishing the MPHPT). It is only expected that CPEEIAs advise MPHPT about opinions and recommendations for the Cabinet Office and individual Ministries. All members of CPEEIAs<sup>3)</sup> work as part-time staff, who are to respond to an inquiry from Ministers ,and not to provide opinions out of it at will (the Liaison Conference of the Cabinet Office and Ministries for Policy Evaluation, 2001).

Finally, as we have seen, PES is certainly influenced by NPM reforms, but it is substantially deferent from NPM-based skills in terms of the lack of Participatory Evaluation Methods (PEMs) (Public Management Service of OECD, 1998; Nishio, 2000). The concept of PEMs mean that "dialogue with users and staff improves understanding and responsiveness to their needs and priorities" (Public Management Service of OECD, 1998 : p. 4). One of the reasons why JPA does not adopt PEMs is that Japanese public bureaucracy has no intent to consider people more seriously toward opening the dialogue. Of course, there are common limitations of evaluation Pollitt summarized (2002,pp.280-281), but enough evidence to show that is supported by the spread of HIV and BSE throughout Japan(Shindo, 2002).

Additionally speaking, I do not point out here the Standard Methods for Policy Evaluation indicated by the Standard Guidelines for Policy Evaluation. This is mainly because it is impossible to examine it before using it.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I can answer two questions I stated in the introduction. For one thing, bureaucrats have limitations of learning from all experiences of NPM reforms. This is maily because there seems to be, in Japan, less dependence of bureacrats on politicians rather than other countries, even if the parliamentary cabinet system of Japan works legally. In other words, Japanese public bureacracy has such a lot of autonomy of "self-conservation"

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3) The members of CPEEIAs consist of professors (17 persons), CPA(3 persons), consultants (3 persons), and directors of private company (3persons). The chair is Professor Michio Muramatsu (University of Kyoto).

that bureaucrats are surely eager to adopt the vocabulary of NPM for completing scenarios of administrative reform in the late 1990's, and to choose some skills they want, while explaining successful experiences of NPM from one side<sup>4)</sup>.

For another, NPM can provide JPA final opportunities not for achieving a breakthrough in the state of JPA, but for examining JPA fundamentally with the purpose of refounding itself. However, so doing, JPA has not fully developed disciples so that individual disciplines of JPA are necessary to develop into more specialized ones. It is stressed that Furukawa and Hoshino (2001) already have attempted to invent "Knowledge-Based Governance by Performance Measurement" beyond the New Public Management.

A further direction of this study will be to refound JPA for building civic governance (Box, 1998). Intrinsically, it is, of course, repeated that individual disciplines of JPA need to develop into more specialized ones. Extrinsically, it is more hopeful prospect for the near future that the gradual emergence of popular public pressures thoroughly permeates the state administration. This is mainly because it will hold politicians responsive to the need of citizens, and in turn for their electoral success, politicians will hold bureaucrats accountable for citizens. The accountability of the JPA will provide Japanese civil society with a strong foundation for civic governance beyond managerialism such as NPM.

#### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Professor B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh) and Dr. Yasuo Takao (Curtin University of Technology). This writing of this paper was made possible largely through the special grant (category 1) of FY2001 from Ritsumeikan University, and I would like to acknowledge here generosity of the institution.

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4) it is pointed out that there is less difference between political leadership of IASB (1982) and of Administrative Reform Committee (1996) and Administrative Reform Council (1997) except whether there is borrowing from experiences of foreign reforms or not (see, Muramatsu, Michio and Ellis S. Krauss, 1996: p. 238).

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This paper was presented for the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Public Administration Theory Network, Cleveland State University, Ohio, 29 May – 1 June, 2002.