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**Abstract**

University reforms around the world reflect many of the ideas and measures associated with the New Public Management (NPM) reform wave that emerged in Australia and New Zealand in the early 1980s. However, they also display features of the post-NPM reforms introduced in the last decade. In this article I focus on university reforms in Japan, looking both at historical features of Japanese universities and more specifically at the 2004 reform that established the National University Corporations. I then discuss how the Japanese university reforms compare with the main reform trends at European universities. Finally, I explain Japanese university reforms in terms of three organizational theory perspectives ? an instrumental, a cultural and an imitation perspective. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)