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**Abstract**

Japanese universities have been tightly controlled by the Ministry of Education and it has often been pointed out that their autonomy has been ambiguous. In the late 1990s, however, the Japanese government started the debate about introducing an Independent Administrative Institution system in order to deregulate its authority and to make the relationship between the government and national universities clear. If this system were actually introduced, universities in Japan would not only enjoy a great amount of autonomy, but would also face financial problems. The reality is unclear so far, but some national universities have already started to reform themselves radically in preparation for the introduction. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Murasawa, Masataka, E-mail: mrswm@z.hkg.ac.jp