

School evaluation at Japanese schools: policy intentions and practical appropriation

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In the present paper the authors will describe the development of school evaluation policies in the context of recent Japanese education reform. In doing so, the applicability of Neave's 'Evaluative State' thesis shall be examined. And then they will move on to the discussion as to how the policies will work in schools. Drawing on the findings of their empirical research into student involvement in the school evaluation process, the authors will deal with the 'politics of appropriation'. The process could be of a liberating nature at the present time, as opposed to the managerial intentions of policy.

Keywords: Japanese education reform; Evaluative State; school evaluation; student involvement; politics of appropriation

Introduction

Public education on the defensive

One of the recent controversies over the Japanese education system was concerned with the redistribution of fiscal responsibility between the layers of government: whether the central government should continue to reimburse half of the bill for compulsory school personnel employed by local governments. Those who represent the prefectural and municipal governments demanded that the ring-fenced state grants for school teachers and staffing costs should be abolished and replaced with block grants so that local autonomy in relation to educational provision could be enhanced (Six Local Government Associations 2004). This claim was in line with the wider reform agenda of public finance and the taxation system, which the former Koizumi government had strongly promoted. The agenda included either abolishment or cutback of state subsidy with the transfer of tax revenue sources to local governments.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology, with the support from not a few educational interest groups, had been resistant to the claim made by the local government representatives. The Ministry made the counterargument that abolishment of the state subsidy system for compulsory schooling costs would cause a local disparity of provision and inequality of opportunity and thus threaten the overall standard of education. In November 2005, an agreement between the government and ruling parties was reached which brought a temporary truce to the struggle, with the burden incurred by central government being cut from a half to a third and tax revenue sources equalling some 850 billion yen being transferred to the local governments (Fujita 2005; Nakajima 2006; Ogawa 2006).

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The Koizumi government pursued a comprehensive societal restructuring agenda called 'Structural Reform' to revitalise the national economy, which was based on the principles of decentralisation, deregulation and marketisation. In common with reforms grounded in neo-liberalism or New Right ideology in Anglo-American and some European countries (Clarke and Newman 1997; Pollitt 1990), the Structural Reform targeted the expanding public sector spending and challenged the establishments concerned. The public education sector among others has been subject to fierce attacks by decentralisation and marketisation. For example, school choice was exhorted and measures to authorise profit-making companies to run public schools were legislated. The controversy over the finance of school staffing costs and its settlement was another example showing that public education was now under siege.

Structural reform of education

In this adversity, the Ministry was forced to make not a few concessions and also resort to its own survival strategies. Thus, it was desperate to place compulsory schooling within the national strategic plan to make Japan a science and technology led, more productive nation, which requires restructuring of compulsory schooling so that excellent human resources can be more efficiently fed into the economy. And this was to legitimate a new form of state intervention in education. Ironically enough, the Ministry, following the recommendations of the Central Council on Education (2005), an advisory body accountable to the Minister, now referred to its own reform agenda as 'Structural Reform of Compulsory Education'. In its public document of the same title, the Ministry declared that the compulsory education system was in need of structural reform to assure its quality through the following cyclical steps (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology 2005a, 1):

- The central government is to take responsibility for setting objectives and assuring the infrastructures to achieve these objectives.
- More powers and responsibilities are to be delegated to municipal governments and schools.
- The central government is to check up on the achievements.

Thus, the central government is to play a role of setting objectives, securing 'inputs' (i.e. national course of study, fully prepared teachers, funding), and auditing 'outcomes' through the national testing of academic achievement and the school evaluation regime, while the responsibility for 'process' is to be set on the shoulders of local governments and schools.

The questions of the present paper

From the background which we have sketched thus far, our aim now is to propose and examine two questions. One is how we should understand the emerging mode of quality assurance in the Japanese education system. In dealing with this question, an emphasis shall be put on the development of school evaluation policy and its managerial intentions. We will examine, in particular, the applicability of Neave's (1988, 1998) thesis of the 'Evaluative State' to Japanese education reform. The other question is how the school evaluation policies would work in schools. We will discuss whether there is any room left for practical manoeuvring, drawing on the findings of empirical research which we conducted into a local practice of student involvement in the school self-evaluation process. In theoretical terms, we will deal with the 'politics of appropriation' (Jeffrey and Woods 2003, 48), in the context of conflict between the managerial thrusts of policy and the educational values of practitioners.

The rise of the Evaluative State in the Japanese education system

The national guidelines for school evaluation

Since April 2002, Japanese schools have been exhorted by the provision of ministerial ordinance to self-evaluate their educational and management activities. Many of the schools had been engaged in some kind of reflective activity. However, this time an emphasis is put on the release of the results as well as the instrumental nature of self-evaluation accommodated in the management cycle. This is presented as concomitant with enhanced autonomy and accountability of individual schools (Central Council on Education 1998). In the background, there was a criticism that schools spent time in vain doing a self-contained and self-satisfying reflection which contributed little, if anything, to improvement.

Since then, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology has made annual inquiries concerning the present state of school self-evaluation activities and published the findings. In 2004, almost all (96.5%) of publicly funded schools implemented self-evaluation, but only 42.8% of these schools published the results. Examined in more detail, these findings showed some other local discrepancies. The proportion of self-evaluating schools which had set the annual objectives and evaluation items at the beginning of the academic year was 83.9% and 84.5% respectively, but only 43.6% of these schools had set evaluation criteria, which particularly frustrated the Ministry. Self-evaluation without any criteria for ascertaining the degree to which objectives had been met would not lead to school improvement. And also it was reported that many schools found difficulties in the setting of evaluation items and criteria, and the utilisation of evaluation results for improvement. Thus, reflecting the discrepancy and issues to be dealt with, the Ministry published the Guidelines for School Evaluation at Compulsory Education Stage in March 2006 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology 2006).

As was mentioned in the preceding section, school evaluation now constitutes a significant part of the quality assurance mechanism advocated by the Ministry. The Guidelines embrace external as well as internal evaluation and advise the school establishing authorities (mostly the local governments) to set external evaluation panels. The panels should consist of school councillors, parent-teacher association post-holders and local community representatives. The panels should visit schools and interview the staff, students and parents. They are expected to make sure that the self-evaluation and improvement activities are done properly. In addition, the Guidelines put an apparently new emphasis on the responsibility of the school establishing authorities to support and provide for their schools in the light of the evaluation results.

The school evaluation envisaged in the Guidelines is instrumental in the sense that it is assumed to lead to the school's own improvement activities and the authority's support, and also elicit cooperation from parents and the local community. The Guidelines have a quality assurance orientation. They include, as exemplars, 10 evaluation items (curriculum and teaching, pastoral guidance, career guidance, safety management, health management, special education, school management and organisation, professional development, cooperation with parents and local residents, premises and facilities), each of which has some indices. For example, the item of curriculum and teaching has the following evaluation indices:

- How well is the curriculum organised and implemented, with particular attention to lesson objectives, lesson plans and the number of lessons.
- The results of criterion-referenced and summative evaluations of students' learning.
- The results of tests on students' academic, emotional and physical abilities.
- The results of lesson evaluations carried out by students.
- How well is personalised teaching being implemented, including individualised lesson, teaching to groups, and differentiated teaching based on students' achievement?

- How well are out-of-school human resources utilised in teaching and the development of teaching materials?
- How well are educational resources, including local nature, customs or cultural assets, utilised?

The managerial power of evaluation

These items and indices are presented as exemplars. But they are intended to decrease the diversity and discrepancies in terms of school evaluation practices and may well create rather strong institutional pressures. This may well lead to isomorphism of local school evaluation practices and prove to be beneficial in terms of quality assurance. However, it could be problematic, for the evaluation not only probes the nature or degree of what is evaluated according to certain criteria but also makes the evaluated fit the criteria. For example, the index of personalised teaching refers to differentiated teaching based on students' achievement, which is controversial in terms of both its effects and ethics (Sato 2004). The controversy will be neutralised. And also, the controversy surrounding the national regime of testing will be neutralised. The Guidelines 'encourage' schools to put more emphasis on the results of summative as well as criterion-referenced evaluation and tests of students' ability and performance, which had hitherto been less stressed in school self-evaluation practices. As such are the effects of the evaluation criteria and indices as a whole, a certain mode of teaching and learning, educational and management activities, and type of education system will be prioritised and promoted, marginalising the others. Despite its technical appearance, the school evaluation is likely to work as a disciplinary mechanism.

Concerning the managerial power of evaluation, Michael Power (1997), in his critical review of the audit regime emerging in the field of public administration as well as corporate governance, presents two contrasting scenarios: colonisation and decoupling. By audit Power means verification of self-evaluation carried out by an external party but the audit regime effectively embraces both internal and external evaluations. One possible scenario is that schools would be colonised. The evaluation world would provide a dominant reference point for schools' teaching and management activities. According to Power, the values and practices which evaluation entails will penetrate deep into the core of organisational operations, not just in terms of requiring energy and resources to conform to evaluation demands but in the creation of new mentalities, new incentives and perceptions of significance. That is to say, the evaluation regime may contribute to the construction of a new organisational actor (Power 1997, 97, cf. Katsuno 2006).

The other possible scenario is decoupling. Schools would employ some strategy to buffer their core activities from the impact of evaluation, particularly external evaluation. In contrast to the first scenario, evaluation would be compartmentalised and ritualised. However, Power (1997) doubts whether decoupling in its pure sense would take place. Explicit attempts to compartmentalise the evaluation process would be costly. In addition to this,

Internal audit [evaluation] officers may 'change sides' and may use their new found power to advance internal changes. The external audit [evaluation] may even be desired by parts of the organization to exercise leverage over other parts. And ways of talking around audit [evaluation] processes inevitably perforate into other areas of organizational life. (Power 1997, 97)

The point raised here by Power is highly significant for the school evaluation process in Japan. In recent years, school management organisations have become more stratified. Head teachers and their senior management teams have had more authority over individual teachers' practices. However it should be added that head teachers are more vulnerable to administrative and political directives while more powerful in relation to their staff. How head teachers will perform the role of leading actor within the audit regime, as envisaged by the Guidelines, is an

issue of much interest. If particular educational values and logics are established within a school and they militate against those promoted by the policy-advocated style of self and external evaluations, will head teachers play a role of buffer or lead in the educational and organisational change? This forms a significant part of the question of how the school evaluation policies will work in schools, to which we will turn later.

Characteristics of the Japanese version of the Evaluative State

These policy developments now lead us to consider the applicability of the Evaluative State thesis (Neave 1988, 1998). Put another way, can we add the Japanese case to a list of countries (Australia, England and Wales, New Zealand, Sweden, USA), in whose education policies Whitty and his colleagues (1998) saw considerable congruencies as follows:

Within the range of political rationales, it is the neo-liberal alternative which dominates, as does a particular emphasis on market-type mechanisms. This decentralisation via the market is also articulated with justification and efficiency, drawing on the discourse of the new public management with its emphasis on strong school management and external scrutiny – made possible by the performance indicators and competency-based assessment procedures, reinforced in many cases by external inspection. (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, 35)

Just as Whitty and his colleagues detected variance as well as congruence in their cross-national examination of education reform, the Japanese case has its own particularities. For one thing, the democracy of local participation is scarcely referred to as justification for decentralisation and a reference to funding might be just a reflection of the continuing battle between the Ministry and finance authorities within the government. Moreover, it could be said that the recent Japanese education reform along these lines is still at the rudimentary stage. The Ministry has just begun a pilot study into external inspection of schools and only a tenth of local governments across the country have implemented parental choice of school (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology 2005b). Nonetheless, it seems safe to say that the state will assume the status of Evaluative State (Neave 1988), a helpful conception for understanding how the central government remains strong while more or less devolving power to local governments and schools.

The Evaluative State carries out evaluations for strategic change rather than for system maintenance and also this particular kind of evaluation is not an 'a-priori' but an 'a posteriori' one.

What matters is not the process by which goals might be achieved, but the output. Neave argues that this shift of emphasis from process to product, from input to output, indicates a new development in the relationship between the state and the education system. First, it replaces the predominant concerns of quality of provision and equity of access and opportunity. Second, by focusing on output, it redefines the purpose of education in terms of the economy rather than demand. Third, it provides a powerful instrument for steering individual institutions. (Whitty, Power, and Halpin 1998, 37)

We are witnessing a rise of the same relationship between the state and the education system in Japan as well. It should be remembered that imperatives of economy and global competition have been driving the structural reform of education with its own quality assurance system. Here again, we can point out some idiosyncratic features of the Japanese version of the Evaluative State. Neave (1998, 271), in contemplating the cause of the advent of the Evaluative State, calls our attention to the difference between France, Spain, Belgium, Sweden on the one hand, and the UK and the Netherlands on the other, in terms of the existence and degree of the move towards a more active democracy. The rise of the Evaluative State is more or less concerned with the countermove by governments to recover their tattered reputation by means of delegating responsibility to regional authorities. In the highly centralised higher education systems, distrust of an expert society and big government could be a driving force of

the shift to the Evaluative State. In the mean time, in the countries where the higher education system had been decentralised, the shift was motivated by economic renovation. Although Neave's discussion is constructed in terms of higher education, the differentiation could be applied as an analytical framework in terms of primary and secondary education. Situated in the framework, the Japanese Evaluative State will certainly stand out; it has been strongly centralised but the nonetheless the shift to the Evaluative State is driven by economic imperatives rather than participatory democracy. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this point further. However, for reasons of space, we will now move on to the second question of the 'politics of appropriation'.

The practical appropriation of school evaluation

Student involvement in the school evaluation process

Although the pressures for nationwide isomorphism will build up, we can still see some indigeneness in local institutions and practices of school self-evaluation at the present time. One of the idiosyncratic features which we will look at in this section has something to do with the location of students within the process. The Guidelines published by the Ministry expect that the views and demands of students should be heard mainly by means of questionnaires. In particular, evaluation of teaching should be carried out by students, the results of which should be fed somehow into the management for school improvement. The Committee for Educational Renewal, a private advisory council for the present Prime Minister Abe, more strongly advocates the external evaluator's role on the part of students along with parents and local residents with explicit concerns for screening and exclusion of weak teachers and schools (Committee for Educational Renewal 2006). A school identified as weak could be supported but also surely penalised within the quasi-market of public schooling (see Japan Business Federation 2005 for the exhortation of school evaluation from the business point of view). Thus, the involvement of students in the school evaluation process becomes politically weighted. The schools which have students evaluate teaching and lessons are on the increase, particularly at the secondary stage, sometimes causing defensiveness and hostility among teachers (Katsuno 2005). However, it is unusual for students to take part in the forums summoned for school self-evaluation as formal members along with parents, local residents, school councillors and other adults. Nonetheless this happens at secondary schools in Saitama Prefecture.

In March 2003, the Inquiry Committee reported to the Saitama Prefectural Education Board. The report advised:

To make an evaluation objective and provide for an opportunity for discussion on school activities as a whole, what is called a school evaluation forum should be set up at individual schools. The forum should consist of students, parents, representatives from the local community but the precise membership will depend on the circumstances of the schools. (Inquiry Committee on the School Self-Evaluation System, Saitama Prefectural Education Board, 2003)

The Ministry's Guidelines don't envisage that students should be included in the evaluation panel or committee, although they don't completely exclude them. For the most part, students are identified either as a 'valuable' data source for internal evaluation or external evaluators who are expected to individually rate the quality of teaching and other educational activities of their schools. However, this report definitely involves students in school evaluation and defines this process as self-evaluation, not external evaluation of schools. What made this local institution of school evaluation possible is still to be investigated, but it has something to do with the less managerial and functional attitude of the Board towards school evaluation, which puts more emphasis on its discursive and communicative aspects. The Board encouraged schools to pay attention to the significance of school evaluation as a 'communication tool', not

only within school but also for the school's external relations (Saitama Prefectural Education Board 2004).

At the beginning of the academic year, Saitama Prefectural schools are required to set annual objectives and evaluation criteria and fill in the school self-evaluation sheets. Typically they set a few items: for example, improvement of teaching and learning, collaboration with parents and the local community, and establishing discipline in school. Linked to the whole-school items, sub-units by subject, grade and management function set their own objectives. Formative as well as summative reviews, typically halfway through and at the end of academic year, are conducted alongside the teaching and management activities. These results are to be published together with, if any, findings of questionnaires completed by students, parents and local residents. So far these practices are rather commonplace nationally. However, at Saitama Prefectural schools, student representatives are formally involved in the school evaluation forum, which constitutes an idiosyncratic part of the system.

The practical perspectives of students and teachers

We conducted a series of observations and interviews with the teaching staff and students at six Saitama Prefectural schools in the academic years of 2004 to 2006 in order to investigate how the system of school evaluation is put into operation and how they perceive the process. The number of school staff interviewees was 22 in total, which included head teachers of all six schools, staff who are responsible for school self-evaluation and teacher advisers to the student council. We talked to over 40 students in an informal atmosphere; both appointed members of the forum (mostly student council members) and volunteer participants who had observer status were included. In the present paper, we will focus on a particular school which had been appointed as one of the research and development schools before the prefectural scheme of school evaluation was implemented. The findings which we will present in relation to the school here are not true of other schools. However, as we will show below, even at this school, which has the longest experience of having a forum, things have not been going without difficulty. We believe that we can discuss something of the nature of the Saitama Prefectural school evaluation scheme and its operation at the individual school level, drawing mainly on the findings which we have gained from this particular field site.

On several occasions, we observed that students actively took part in discussions in the forum and they sometimes went so far as to initiate an improvement process. The student council has periodically conducted surveys to consolidate the demands of students and organised discussions both at classroom and whole-school levels. The deputy chair of the student council explained this point as follows:

We, members of the student council, cannot accomplish anything by ourselves. In the long run, things will not change unless peer students get involved. The peer students make their voices heard. And the council will convey them to teachers, rather than taking the lead. This is the best way, I think. (Deputy chair, student council)

Based on the returns and discussion, they made proposals for change, which as far as we observed teachers and other adult members of the forum sincerely listened and responded to. The proposals which students presented included the following:

- to change the dress code, for example seeking approval to wear polo-shirts during the summer term;
- to change the rules concerning the use of mobile phones in school;
- to demand the installation of air-conditioning facilities in classrooms;
- to demand that lessons be improved in different ways, for example punctuality on the part of teachers and more effective use of audiovisual aids.

One of the early successes which the students have garnered so far was to change the school rule concerned with mobile phones. They now can bring them on the school site with the agreed-on ban of use in classes. Now the students are enthusiastic about the change in dress code.

We noted the abundance of proposals within the last category, teaching and learning, initiated by the students at our field schools. Apparently contradictory demands, for example more thought-provoking lesson versus more exam-oriented lessons, were sometimes presented, which stimulated animated discussion among the participants of the forum. What seemed important to us was that after the forum teacher participants brought back the demands and discussed them with their colleagues. At the particular school which we present here, a whole-day professional development workshop on the basis of student demands was organised and almost all of the teaching staff took part in it.

To elucidate the nature of this type of student activity in relation to school evaluation, the typology of 'student voice' devised by Michael Fielding (2004) should be useful. According to his argument, student voice in terms of school improvement can mean different things. He presents a continuum, at one end of which student voice is in largely passive mode and only audible through the products of past performance (i.e. 'students as data source') and at the other end student voice is an initiating force in an inquiry process which invites teachers' involvement as facilitating and enabling partners in learning (i.e. 'students as researchers') (Fielding 2004, 202). As you move from the former end to the latter, students will assume more active and independent roles and accordingly the relationship between students and teachers becomes more egalitarian. Between the two ends are located 'students as active respondents' and 'students as co-researchers'. On 'students as researchers', Fielding observes the following:

[I]t is students who identify issues to be researched or investigated; students who undertake the research with the support of staff; students who have responsibility for making sense of the data, writing a report or presenting their findings; and it is students to whom the class teacher, team/department or school community are bound to respond in ways which are respectful, attentive and committed to positive change. (Fielding 2004, 202)

Students' activities in relation to the school evaluation system operated at Saitama Prefectural schools show some characteristics of 'students as researchers' though the more passive role of students can be found as well. And, needless to say, not all of the adult participants are willing to listen to the student voice. This is true of teachers.

I suppose that you have already noticed only a section of the staff have got fully involved. There are some who are enthusiastic; some who have got involved and the others who don't. (Head teacher)

However, we have encountered enthusiastic and supportive teachers. And it is noteworthy that they often see the benefit of active involvement of students in the process of school evaluation in terms of the effects on their development as independent and tolerant individuals.

How should I say, a society... a tiny society as the school may be, there are different people ... in leading a social life, not just presenting yourselves, but a relational aspect could be noticed ... There are different people, friends who may think differently and then how should we do?... I hope that they will come to think in terms of the social terms. To get a feel of participation in the social, I want them to experience the minutiae of real life democracy. (Head teacher)

In the process, these teachers demand that their students respect other perspectives and form an informed opinion. They advise student representatives to involve many other students, to be responsive to the often suppressed and inaudible voices, for example introvert or under-achieving students.

They are glad to see the students present their opinions at such a public arena as the school evaluation forum, however humble they appear at first.

Well, my colleagues often praise the students, saying 'Good job'. 'She did better than I had expected'. Our students are shy; they are not used to presenting themselves in front of others. And generally speaking they rarely have opportunities to form their opinion, develop the presentation skills and vocabulary. (Teacher adviser to student council)

On the whole, the supportive teachers attach educational meaning to student involvement and this meaning seems to undergird their practice.

I would like to attach educational meaning to school evaluation, whatever the results of discussion are. They managed to present their opinion. That is an achievement. (Teacher adviser to student council)

I see the forum as a place where students will be educationally stretched and developed. (Social sciences teacher)

This practical perspective on student involvement is instrumental as are the managerial intentions of the school evaluation policy, but the means-to-end relationship runs in different directions. While the policy identifies student involvement as a means to an end of school improvement, which is often prescribed from the administrative and political point of view, the supportive practitioners see the school evaluation as a means to an end of students' personal and social development. They read the meaning of a widely conceived citizenship education into the school evaluation practices, which we will argue constitutes a practical appropriation.

Discussion and conclusion

Many school staff at this particular field school advocate the value of the development of students as independent and tolerant individuals. They are aware of the managerial nature of school evaluation promoted by the policies and make an intentional choice as to how the process should be conducted. According to Jeffrey and Woods (2003, 48), to appropriate is to take over, to use as one's own. It could be argued that the teachers use the occasions of school evaluation to further their own educational ends.

We can see that there is room left for practical manoeuvring. Having said so, however, we must add reservations. It should be remembered that the Japanese version of the Evaluative State has just emerged and that accordingly the managerial power of school evaluation is not yet in full swing. The present authors mostly agree with Fielding when he says that under the neo-liberal hegemony, promotion of student engagement turns out to be important and prominent for much the same reason as 'user' engagement is important in other professions (Fielding 2004, 205). In articulating the largely predictable list of what makes a good teacher, a good lesson, or a good school, students may well become unwitting agents of government control. Student voice could constrain teachers' and schools' practices. Moreover, students could constrain themselves and also incur 'responsibilisation' (Kelly 2001) as a result of participating in the school evaluation process, for they are often required to reflect on and evaluate their own efforts and attitudes towards achievement (Katsuno 2005). We should not come to a hasty conclusion as to how the school evaluation policies work in schools.

Also, our argument is based on this particular case study. As is shown in the preceding section, the head teacher effectively buffers the pressures for more managerial practices of school self-evaluation which put more emphasis on the results of examinations among other things. However it is still to be seen whether the head teacher could endure if the managerial intentions of policy increase and more fiercely militate against the educational values which he and his staff uphold. Also it should be remembered that he runs the school within the prefectural scheme of the school self-evaluation forum. The local and idiosyncratic scheme plays a significant

buffering role against the national policies. We should conduct more robust empirical research in terms of both width and depth.

However, at the moment, it is not deniable that we can see a disjuncture between school evaluation policies and practices where a more liberating story for students and possibly teachers can open up. While within neo-liberal thinking student voice is individualised, supportive teachers intend to make use of the school self-evaluation forum as a public arena and encourage student representatives to reach the whole student body, reminding them of collective responsibility. We observed some occasions where student representatives of different schools came together to exchange their experiences and jointly discussed the issues they faced when they participated in school improvement through evaluation.

There is no easy way to enact the alternative idea. There are many obstacles: institutional pressures for practices of a more disciplinary nature, unwillingness on the part of not a few teachers and other adults, and difficulty involving the students other than as forum representatives. However, at least as far as the last issue is concerned, members of the student council are still optimistic, while they fully understand the difficulties.

We are asked by peer students, ‘What are you doing?’ or ‘What is the forum?’ I suppose that only a few students are interested in whole-school issues. But that is why we encourage them to come and observe the forum so that they can get interested. (Deputy chair, student council)

Now the challenge is, it seems to us, not only to advocate the more liberating idea of school evaluation but to research further into the contested nature of policies and practices.

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