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An Easy Guide to School Evaluation

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“School evaluation” is new to teacher education. The activity, so-called school evaluation, had been conducted in some regions and schools in Japan since the 1950s. It came to be practiced nationwide around after the “Standard for Elementary School Establishment” was revised in April 2002. It required that “schools should make effort to implement “self-evaluation” concerning their activities, and disclose the results to the public.” Although it was legislated in July 2007 according to the revision of the “School Education Law”, school evaluation has not yet become well established.

School evaluation is a young system. Therefore, most in-service teachers have never learned it. Even professors of teacher-training colleges are often feeling their way to teach school evaluation as only a few professors have practical knowledge of it. In classes, professors give lectures such as “The importance of school evaluation” and “Methodology of school evaluation” and explain about “accountability”, “PDCA cycle”, “quality assurance”, and so on. The classes might also include lectures of the “School Evaluation Guidelines” issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and practices of schools advanced in implementing school evaluation. Such classes on school evaluation are often said to be “difficult.”

Then, what is the most important thing that can be said for school evaluation? It would be to focus on thinking “how should I utilize it?” to improve the school in which you (might) get involved. Thinking how to organize, modify, and operate it. In general, “evaluation” tends to be disliked. However, school evaluation in which MEXT takes a leadership role is clearly intended to “improve” school activities. The beauty of school evaluation should be that it is undertaken by the entire organization —not merely by some individuals such as certain teachers—as an approach to improving a school. Purposeful and system

atic communication, sharing objectively revealed facts among all involved, and pursuing effective improvement strategies. Such vigorous activities could be realized by the atmosphere of “thinking freely”.



The goals and strategies would vary among schools. Consequently, it is natural that purposes and methods for school evaluation vary widely. The ways to evaluate schools should be left to each school’s discretion (as underscored in the “Guidelines” of MEXT and others). For example, there should be many approaches to elicit the students’ guardians’ wishes depending on schools: questionnaires are more convenient; results of group hearings in parent–teacher’s meetings are more effective; alternatively, hearing records of representatives from children’s guardians will suffice. Implementation of “school evaluation” requires abilities to self-prescribe treatments, whereby people determine their dosage and usage by themselves according to their symptoms and physical strength.

“Thinking freely” is quite a task. Moreover, sharing a mutual understanding within schools and local communities is even more difficult. A researcher working with my senior associate says that it will take “10 years” to implement school evaluation and see its fruits. It is certainly no use to create such a perfect “pro forma” set of circumstances overnight. Schools must establish an ethos of “thinking together” and gradually shape and improve it after determining the basis. Reaching such an understanding seems to be a secret for the “Easy Guide”. I apologize that this is not a great secret at all.

Welcoming a New Professor



Kenji Maehara

I started a new job at the Division of Research and Development for In-Service Teachers of the Curriculum Center for Teachers on October 1, 2009. I have worked for teacher-training courses at private universities for about 15 years and mainly became involved in teacher education for junior and senior high schools. Working for the Center is a new challenge for me. I am grateful to be given such an opportunity and will try to get used to the Center's work as soon as possible. I would like to ask for your support in various areas of interest.

To date, I have mainly studied trends of education reform in modern Germany. From a historical perspective, many similarities exist between the educational systems in Germany and in Japan. However, the directions of their postwar educational policies differed considerably. We can see a contrasting orientation, such as when Germany is carrying on reforms aimed at producing educational systems similar to those of Japanese education, Japan is setting its goal for educational systems resembling those of German education. These two nations seem as though they are running on opposite sides of a circular track, keeping some distance of halfway around; it can hardly be said which country is ahead. There might be no objectively "correct answer" for how to organize education. It seems likely that the search and reform processes

changing trends of times and social circumstances. I would like to make use of such actual feelings—which I have held in my previous comparative studies—and put them to practical use for much-needed research activities at the Center.

Although I have not yet concretely planned my own study for in-service training. I am considering the following topics: criteria for subjective and objective measurements of the "effects" of in-service training, significance and transformation of a "training culture" for teachers, and establishment of a functional growth theory of teachers based on a framework of functional growth theories for ordinary business people. In any case, maintaining contact with colleagues at the Center and relevant departments of universities, schools, and boards of education, I would like to elaborate concrete research plans with my motto – "always lighten mental and physical footwork!"

In September of this year, the Democratic Party of Japan gained control of the government for the first time. They will bring considerable changes to educational policies as well. It will be a new era that demands a new order for politics and administration and for relationships in schools. Under such circumstances, the *raison d'être* for researchers and research institutions will be questioned again. As a researcher, I will maintain objectivity and specialties, and not lean and confine myself there. With "lightness of footwork", I would like to set my goal for "high ambition" while confronting the realities woven by politics or administration and schools.

On a final note, Tokyo Gakugei University is actually my alma mater, where I spent four years as an undergraduate. In that sense, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to work at the Center. Although the scenery of Musashi-koganei and Kokubunji Stations has changed dramatically, the passion of students for seeking their dreams for the future on this campus is apparently unchanged. Placing importance on relationships with such students, I will try to fulfill my responsibilities adequately as an education staff member of this university. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Research Project of the Division of Curriculum Research and Development

Examination of the Teacher Education Curriculum: Based on Interviews with Graduates from Tokyo Gakugei University at the Time of Foundation

In recent teacher education policies, fostering of “practical teaching abilities” for teachers is vociferously demanded. Meanwhile, concerns have arisen that teacher education at universities might become “normal school”-like through interventions by the government and boards of education and be sufficient only to foster “practical teaching abilities” in a narrow sense. In the first place, how should universities apprehend “practical teaching abilities” in a broader sense and nurture teachers? We can think of various options for the methods; it is readily apparent that learning processes in life as a teacher after graduation are crucially important. Therefore, teacher education curriculum should be examined reflectively on a long-term basis, bearing in mind graduates’ lives as teachers and further learning processes thereafter.

This project is designed to examine what meanings and effects teacher education curriculum bring to the growth of teachers. For that purpose, we are conducting interviews of graduates from the time of the founding of Tokyo Gakugei University. The interview questions are related to curriculum offered to them and their lives as teachers. Subjects are those who graduated from the university during the transitional period between the old system and the new system (from the end of the war to around 1953 when the approval system was introduced for universities). Many aspects of curriculum, materials, and teaching practice for teacher education at the time have become unknown, perhaps because they were left to each

school’s discretion. The possibility exists that school-based free education practices were conducted in a sense. During such a confusing period as that after the war, what kind of teacher



education was sought and what kind of curriculum were created on a school basis? Not only formal curriculum, but also teacher–student relationships and informal cultures established among students should be elucidated and analyzed as hidden curriculum.

From such a viewpoint, we first attempt to clarify curriculum at that time multilaterally through studies of the literature and interviews. Second, we attempt to understand what meanings the curriculum of that period eventually had for graduates’ experiences as teachers. Based on the studies described above, we examine curriculum effects in a broader sense and over the long span, including not only intended outcomes of teacher education at the time but also unintended outcomes. Examining them is expected to offer important knowledge and methodologies and contribute to teacher education curriculum reform on a university basis. At the same time, for education policies, such a study will point out the necessity of examination of curriculum with a long-term perspective. (Mariko Kaneko)

Expectations for the Curriculum Center for Teachers

Yoji Ito

Principal, Kokubunji Daiichi Junior High School, Tokyo
Member of the Advisory Board
for the Curriculum
Center for Teachers

In the last Annual Report of the Curriculum Center for Teachers, Professor Heidemarie Kemnitz described three phases of teacher education in Germany: an education period at university, a subsequent working period as a trainee, and a continuous education period as a teacher. As a person who works at a school, I am naturally more interested in the third phase than either of the others.

As a matter of fact, nurturing of in-service teachers has emerged as a pressing challenge. Two reasons can explain that result. One is changes of social circumstances surrounding schools, such as responses to improvement of academic performance, creation of normative consciousness, and complaints by guardians. Another is the arrival of mass retirement and mass employment. For those reasons, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is carrying forward development of human resources more purposefully and systematically both in the boards of education and schools according to

the “Basic Principles of the Development of Human Resources for Teachers” (October 2008).

The study of in-service training is undertaken mainly by the Division of Research and Development for In-Service Teachers of the Center. Additional study is expected to clarify more efficient and effective training. At the same time, education that examines changes of social circumstances surrounding modern schools is necessary in the first and second phases of teacher training as well. To respond to that, students will need to cultivate additional “practical understanding” acquired through experience in addition to conventional “theoretical understanding” obtained through classroom lectures. The following attempts are new for teacher education in that sense: intensive school for future teachers, by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Board of Education; and Tokyo Gakugei University’s lectures entitled “Introduction to the Teaching Profession,” for which the Kokubunji City Board of Education accepts a request of cooperation.

Now and in the future, universities must carry forward nurturing of teachers who can adapt to the new era, closely cooperating and interactively communicating with boards of education and schools. Paying my respects to the role that is played and the research performance of the Center as the pivot of the study, I anticipate further research and development.

Sites Where Teachers Are Nurtured

Elementary Educational College of Capital Normal University, Beijing China

Dr. Xia Pengxiang, Associate Professor



Capital Normal University (CNU) was established on 1954 by the Beijing municipal government as a well-known initial teacher training institute for secondary education. Now CNU has 17 schools and departments, most of which offer programs that are unrelated

to teachers' certification. Approximately 29,000 students are now learning in CNU as undergraduate students, graduate students, and adult education learners. The main campus of CNU is located near Beijing TV Tower, a lively downtown area.

In 1999, the original two Normal Schools in Beijing (Beijing 3rd Normal School and Tongzhou Normal School) were merged into CNU, establishing the Elementary Educational College, making this the year the 10th anniversary of the College. The Elementary Educational College campus has remained at the same location as Beijing 3rd Normal School, about 5 km distant from the main campus. The College is the largest institute for Bachelor-level elementary teacher training in China; approximately 300 undergraduate students of each year of study are pursuing studies in

seven majors: Chinese, English, Music, Fine Arts, Science, Mathematics and Information Technology. Over 98% of graduates have been recruited as elementary school teachers and engaged in basic education in Beijing. The Graduate School, awarding Master degrees, has also been established.

Teaching Practice is a distinguished program of the College's curricula. The program has two parts: "Observation" and "Practicum". "Observation" has been set for the first semester of second-year students; students are required to prepare for later study and work in practicum-based study through two-week observation of all kinds of elementary teachers' work including class lessons and classroom management. Every student must do an intensive "Practicum" during the first semester of the fourth year of study. The period for practicum has been postponed to 10 weeks from the students of 2006 entrance. Only a six-week practicum at elementary school among Beijing urban area was required before then, while a four-week practicum at elementary school among suburban areas has been added. The aim of the curricular reform is to nurture elementary school teachers with full competencies and flexibilities through the practicum at schools of two types. Student teachers must do work as classroom teachers in addition to the teaching subjects. Every student teacher must produce at least seven lesson plans during the period under the supervision of mentor—who supervises two students—and must teach in a subject other than the major during the latter period.

The practicum program of suburb area started on September 1, 2009; 307 students have been engaged as student teachers at 43 elementary schools in eight suburban districts near Beijing.

Terminology of Teacher Education

Reflection

Each teacher must select and practice in the best way according to continuously changing conditions in the education field. Consequently, an excellent teacher—aside from having expertise in fixed skills and rich experience—is a practitioner who can constantly monitor one's own practices objectively and then modify future practices. This process of "monitoring and objective assessment of one's own practice, with later

modification" is known as "reflection" in teacher education. Since Donald A. Schön in the U.S. suggested a teacher's image as a "reflective practitioner" in the 1980s, the image has become a worldwide trend for teacher education research. Furthermore, in Japan, many curricular reforms have been pursued for teacher education with alternation between "practice" activities at schools and "reflection" as their cores. Because teachers in Japan fill many roles aside from teaching, problems associated with mental aspects of "reflection" are many and scientific approaches are few. (Yasuyuki Iwata)

Special Lecture by Visiting Professor

"Internationalization of Teacher Education in Sweden"

Dr. Oleg Popov (Umeå University)

14:30-17:00, Wednesday, December 2, 2009

The 4th meeting room, Iijima Hall,
Koganei Campus, Tokyo Gakugei University

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