

Non-Decision Making in Higher Education: A Case Study of the “Sangyo College” Plan in the 1970s

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The purpose of this paper is to consider the non-decision policy process of higher education. Most traditional studies have been based on the elite model and a few modern studies have been based on the pluralistic model. However, little is known about the character of power from the agenda setting perspective. Central to this issue is the tentatively called “Sangyo College” that was planned by the Sangyo Kyoiku Shinko Chuokai in the 1970s. This organization promoted vocational education in high schools all over Japan. The “Sangyo College” would then have provided an integrated program of vocational and highly specialized education similar to a polytechnic institute.

However, this plan suffered a setback. The Ministry of Education granted priority to vocational education in high schools over colleges. The Ministry of Finance disapproved from the standpoint of financial reorganization following the oil crisis of 1973. And the Ministry of Labor as well as some business lobbies were reluctant to support the “Sangyo College” plan because they feared a potential reduction of the workforce. In conclusion, different ministries prevented this plan from being put onto the policy agenda.

At the same time, however, a few private colleges had already established links to high schools. For example, the Nippon Institute of Technology has a curriculum that develops the content taught in some high schools. In the end, it has fallen upon each college to address the troubles caused by mass higher education without relying on the government.