A Subtle Shift in the Scope of “Purity Education” Policies: A Study Based on Statements by Social Education Bureau Officials Prior to the Convening of the Purity Education Committee

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Postwar Japan’s junsui kyōiku (“purity education”) policies were the responsibility of the Social Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry also created an expert advisory body, the Purity Education Committee, and charged it with studying and deliberating on concrete measures and providing proposals and recommendations; this body was convened on June 4, 1947.

Based on statements by Yamamuro Tamiko and other officials of the Social Education Bureau, this paper attempts to reconstruct the process by which the scope of purity education policies underwent a subtle shift between the time when they became the Education Ministry’s responsibility, namely, the November 14, 1946, vice-ministerial meeting among the ministries involved in the control of unlicensed prostitution and related matters, and June 4, 1947, when the Purity Education Committee first met. Having begun with the single aim of preventing street prostitution, during this time the policies took on a second objective, that of preventing juvenile delinquency.

Preventing street prostitution would later recede in importance, while the prevention of delinquency and educational interventions directed toward youth in general (of both sexes) would become pivotal. The publication of a series of five purity education pamphlets took place against the background of this shift in scope.