

Interpretation and Practice of Time bank in Community Development

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Abstract

Although people used different terms for mutual aid practice in the past, the concept and practice of labor exchange has been embedded in the agriculture society in Taiwan for a very long time. As we enter the era of industry and information the traditional connection and trust is being challenged. The government funded experimental program combined with the traditional labor change and the concept of time bank aim to restore the mutual aid spirit in the community held from 2014 to 2015. The nationwide experimental program took place among different communities. The purpose of the study was to investigate the meaning and practice of time bank to community development in Taiwan.

The study sample was purposely selected from communities that have participated in the experimental program for 2 consecutive years. Including Gi-Chin Community located in Taipei, Wen-Sian Community located in Kaohsiung and Smile Community located in Hualien. In total 11 community leaders and program participants were selected and interviewed in depth.

The findings of the study were as follow:

1. From a cultural aspect: The connection between the concept of time bank and that of labor exchange (Hwan-Gung, 換工) was not smooth. The combination of concept and practice needs more delicate considerations with regard to ethnic,

area, and generation differences.

2. From the contents of labor exchange aspect: The content for exchange consisted mainly of daily chores, it was easy and convenient for helpers and accepting helpers when needed. Professional or technical jobs like cutting hair, sewing, and building houses were especially welcomed and a source of surprise. The participants expressed that mutual aid among community members was usual not just because of the experimental program.
3. From the participant aspect: The participants were mainly female and retired. It limited the richness and scope for the future development of labor change practice. As the scope of the groups increase the trust level between people decrease. It brings a management problem once the community boundary is crossed.

Keywords: Time Bank, Mutual Aid, Community Development