

Paper Number: PA051075

Paper Title: Developing a new theory: A Symbiotic Explanation of the Relationship between the Taiwanese Welfare State and the Voluntary Sector

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Summary of Research

Over the past few decades, Taiwan has built its own welfare regime. Within this regime social welfare ideas continue to be affected by traditional notions of paternalism and altruism, which are fermented within the context of Confucianism. Like many Western welfare states, the Taiwanese government has utilized the voluntary sector to provide social services for a long time. Thus, issues surrounding the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector are becoming increasingly important in Taiwanese social policy. This paper aims to explore the relationship between the Taiwanese welfare state and the voluntary sector within the context of Confucianism.

Description

Over the past few decades, Taiwan has built its own welfare regime. Within this regime social welfare ideas continue to be affected by traditional notions of paternalism and altruism, which are fermented within the context of Confucianism. Like many Western welfare states, the Taiwanese government has utilized the voluntary sector (that is, the 'nonprofit' or 'third' sector) to provide social services for a significant period of time. Thus, issues surrounding the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector are becoming increasingly important in Taiwanese social policy. This paper aims to explore the relationship between the Taiwanese welfare state and the voluntary sector within the context of Confucianism.

There exists some literature which focuses upon the characteristics of the Taiwanese social welfare ideology and welfare regime. Some of this literature argues that Chinese social welfare ideology is primarily based on the traditional notions of paternalism and altruism, which are fermented within the context of Confucianism (eg Chan, 1985; Lin, 1990; Chu, 1993). Other literature indicates that the Taiwanese welfare regime is mainly based on the need to acquire occupational social insurances and that it relies on families, communities and the voluntary sector to provide personal social services (eg Midgley, 1986; Jones, 1993; Goodman & Peng, 1993; Ku, 1997).

Western literature on the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector provides explanatory theories (eg Salamon, 1995; Lewis, 1999; Young, 2000). It also draws attention to the types of the relationship (eg Wolfenden, 1978; Kramer, 1981; Gronbjerg, 1987). In Taiwan, many academics (eg Lin, 1992; Leu, 2001) have adopted the theories of Western societies and there is still no theory which is grounded in the specific Taiwanese circumstances. Thus, this paper develops a new theory 'symbiotic theory' which explains the interaction between the Taiwanese welfare state and the voluntary sector in terms of: resource dependency, professional ability, and power relations or interactions.

The theory has been developed from an empirical study conducted in Taiwan. Following mixed methodologies (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Lewis & Ritchie, 2004), the study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to explore the nature of the Taiwanese voluntary sector and its relationship to the state. 103 questionnaires were returned from a sample of 485. Following the questionnaires, twenty five Chair Persons or Executive Secretaries of social service voluntary sector organizations were interviewed using semi-structured interviews.

The study identified key factors in building a good relationship between the state and the third sector in Taiwan: personal networks, modest attitudes and professional abilities. The government utilizes various strategies to fund the voluntary sector including: subsidies, delegation and contracting-out. The result of such funding mechanisms is that voluntary organizations have to propose projects to apply for funding from government, and have to have basic professional abilities, skills or knowledge to write a proposal

in the first place.

The paper draws attention to the distinct nature of the relationship between the Taiwanese government and the voluntary sector. It is grounded within formal legislation such as the Civil Association Act (2002). This Act determines the nature of the relationship particularly with regard to organizational administration. In addition to this legislative relationship, this study identified three other types of extant symbiotic relationships in Taiwan: mutual benefit relationships, government-benefit relationships, and voluntary sector-benefit relationships.

In summary, this paper contributes to academic knowledge by developing a symbiotic model. It identifies three distinct relationships between the Taiwanese welfare state and the voluntary sector. The paper concludes by highlighting the need for the Taiwanese government to develop a strategy for involving the voluntary sector in social services provision.

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