

# The Impacts of Two-day Weekend System on Living Culture Along with Efficient Countermeasures—Taiwan Experience

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Five-day Workweek System is entitled Two-day Weekend System in Taiwan. This system has been tried out and failed at six counties of Taiwan in 1990 because the related complement to the system was unavailable. A resolution in regards to implementing the system was made by the joint meetings among the Committee of Law and Order, the Committee of Domestic Affairs, and the Committee of Frontier Administration in the Legislative Yuan on 1996/10/9. The resolution demanded that the Central Government implement the Two-day Weekend System on probation but not reduce workweek. Therefore, public officials began to enjoy Two-day Weekend twice a month from 1998/1/1. After two years of trial, Two-day Weekend System has been implemented in all local and the central governments since 2001/1/1 (銓敘部法規司, 2002; 黃臺生, 1996). Retrospectively, people in Taiwan worked 48 hours a week before 1966/7/16 and then 44 hours a week after that. Now it is 40 hours workweek, which is five working days a week and 8 hours a day.

Two-day Weekend System has been developed in the Asia Pacific Region since 1930's. Compared to New Zealand (1936), Australia (1948), The Philippine, Thailand (1958), and India (1985), Two-day Weekend System in East Asia has lately been implemented in countries such as Japan in 1994, China in 1995, Taiwan in 2001, and Korea in 2002 (黃臺生, 1996).

The hours of workweek in North America and European countries are fewer than in Asian

countries. In the United States, the average length of the workweek has not changed since the enactment of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. However, Americans are moving toward a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week economy now. At least three interrelated factors, such as changing economy, demography, and technology, cause the demand for Americans to work late hours and on weekends (Presser, 1999). A law was passed February 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 in France that fixes the standard workweek from 39 hours to 35 in businesses that employ more than 20 people to spur employment growth (The Economist, 2002). The Netherlands began a program in 1988 to reduce the workweek to a mere 36 hours in certain sectors (Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, 1999). In Greece, a bill to reduce the workweek from 40 to 35 hours was opposed by Employer and Worker Confederations and rejected by the Parliament.

South Korea is one of the world's only industrialized nations to still have a six-day workweek until 2002. Reports on a proposal of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung to pass a law mandating a five-day workweek, it expected that the economy would benefit if Koreans had Saturdays off to spend shopping and pursuing leisure activities (Prasso & Ihlwan, 2002). The trial Two-day Weekend System in Korea has just started last April. Personally, I feel this is an impressive symposium that Korean Home Economics Association is really sensitive enough to pick up the theme and concern about its impact on living culture. It is my honor to be invited to make keynote speech on the symposium. This paper was written in response to host of the symposium and through a review of the related literature. It focused on three aspects: the purposes of the system, people's affective attitudes, and people's behavioral actions towards Two-day Weekend System in Taiwan.

## II. PURPOSES

The purpose of implementing Two-day Weekend System has varied according to the philosophy of work and daily living in addition to the context of economic development in each country. In Europe and the United States it is to provide employees with leisure activities and updating their expertise in order to have meaningful daily living (林振賢, 1997). Several purposes have been emphasized as follows: It is to

1. promote quality of laboring and effectiveness of production;

2. enjoy recreational activities and pursue quality of life;
3. refresh labor forces thru taking recreation, reeducation, and relaxation;
4. promote employment growth and slow down rates of unemployment;
5. save time and energy in both employee and employer effects;
6. follow the international conventions; and/or
7. adjust the pressure from Europe and the United States.

On the traditional perspective of management, reducing workweek would be detrimental to competitive strengths and profit of enterprises. This concept has been deep-rooted in the Orientals who work from dawn till dusk in general. Therefore, they would rather insist on lengthening than shortening working hours such as the implementation of Two-day Weekend System. Unless they really realize that competitive economic strengths regarding efficiency, and effectiveness in production are influenced by not only the length of working hours but also multiple interrelated factors.

In the era of knowledge economy and learning society, the fewer work-hours with the more payment is the better policy to attract and recruit young people to enterprises. The restriction of maximum workweek may not guarantee efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness in production due to indulgence in improper leisure activities with fatigue. Meanwhile, workers may not be happy with a shortage of overtime wage. However, reducing workweek is an important policy to protect employees from stress and to promote quality of production (傅禎, 1998 ; 鄭玉瑞, 1998). The arrival of recreational society will be full of a variety of innovative lifestyles. The employer will take advantage of employee's self-discipline, self-learning, physical and mental health promotion, potential development of creativity and innovation through their recreational activities and relaxation with their family or their colleagues. The key point to adopt Two-day Weekend System in Taiwan is to promote quality of employees so that of both employers and employees would benefit.

According to my review of the related literature, three major thrusts have pushed Japan Government to implement Two-day Weekend System over a long span since 1960's. They are thrusts from the employees, the employers, and the international society. It is easy to understand the thrust from employee and the employer. But the critical thrust came from Europeans and Americans who have implemented the Two-day Weekend System since 1950's thru 1960's. They would not be happy with Japanese won the top one or two economic

competitive strengths but still kept a system of long working hour. These three thrusts forced Japan to start a system of Six-day Weekend for Four Weeks in 1988 and followed the system of Two-day Weekend in 1994 (張濤, 1992).

The purposes of implementing Two-day Weekend System in China were different from in Japan. Under the context of developing country in the 1990's China, they drastically adopted the system in 1995. The authority expected to attain the following goals through implementing the Two-day Weekend System: ① to enhance efficiency by reducing workweek, ② to promote quality of civic life, ③ to increase time and expenditures in recreation, ④ to expand opportunities of employment in tertiary industry, and ⑤ to slow down unemployment in surplus manpower (鄭月遂, 1995).

According to the evaluation by the Committee of Economics and Development in Taiwan Government, the implementation of a Monthly Six-day Weekend System in 1998 is anticipated to have comprehensive benefits. For instance, it would save 146 minutes a month for each person who would otherwise get stuck in traffic jams, increase getting along with family for recreational activities, promote parent-child relationships, decline juvenile delinquency, and prosper artistic, cultural, recreational, and physical activities in addition to the tertiary industry (鄭玉瑞, 1998). The same evaluation also pointed out that the reason why people agreed to implement the two-day weekend system were as follows: it may provide employees with opportunities for recreation and reeducation, slow down the ratio of employees' lay off, promote quality of production and employees' life.

The critical point of manpower has been put emphasis on intellectuality rather than labor force in order to keep superiority in competition (such as Japan) and push ahead with the development of tertiary industry (such as China) in the large scale (簡錫塔, 1999). And refining the manpower to be autonomous, flexible, innovative, self-actualization, versatile, and harmonious with people are the positive outcomes of the system in the other scale (林文榮, 2000; 林振賢, 1997; 楊錦文, 1998; 劉俊榮, 1999).

### III. AFFECTIVE ATTITUDES

In general, people such as public officials, educators, employees, and students are happy

to enjoy two-day weekend with the exception of working mothers/parents. The attitudes toward the two-day weekend system tend to be positive. Investigations related to this domain are described briefly as follows:

#### A. Attitudes of Public Officials

Most public officials (94.7%) were satisfied with the Two-day Weekend System and enjoyed their leisure time during two-day weekend for recreational activities. There were 75% of public officials demanding the authorities to conduct recreational activities such as mountain climbing and journeys for pleasure. And about 73.3% of public officials were willing to attend training or in-service education with regard to their careers during two-day weekend. However, about 77% of public officials claimed they might refuse to attend those activities if they are mandatory (銓叙部法規司, 2002).

#### B. Attitudes of Educators

Most educators felt both happy and concerned about the implementation of Two-day Weekend System in school. They were happy with five-day teaching in addition to family and community shared responsibilities for educating children. However, they worried about some students whose parents would be unable to care for children due to having no weekends. In this case, the students might indulge themselves in video arcades, arcade games, Internet cafe, hallucinogen or drugs. Or more frequently, students may be forced to take extra lessons in cram schools after class (王卉卉, 2001; 汪季參, 1997; 郭昭佑, 1997; 郭國輝, 1997; 許銘欽, 1997; 陳忠木, 1998; 張振成, 1998; 曾毓奎, 2001).

#### C. Attitudes of Students and Their Parents

A study conducted at Taipei City, Taipei County, Taichung City, and Kaohsiung City by King Car Education Foundation found that over 34% of parents with their 6-15 years old children felt inconvenient with two-day weekend. In addition, 40% of parents claimed they could not adjust to the system. Only 14% of parents were able to take care of their children during two-day weekend. And it was interesting that about 55% of parents demanded the

school arrange extra-curriculum regarding parent-child program. The categories of the program they mentioned were Athletics (45%), Home Economics (18%), Fine Arts (10%), and the others (27%). The same study pointed out that students preferred joining outdoor activities with their parents (49%) to attending extra talent and skill classes (9%).

Another study conducted at Taipei City (陳雪芬, 1997) showed that about 25% of parents agreed that teachers and schools should take care of their children during two-day weekend but 28% of parents disagreed. And 30% of parents complained that no one looked after their children during two-day weekend. On the contrary, about 40% of parents demanded that schools should provide extra guidance for students. The content of guidance included extra class for development of talent and skill (54%) and academic achievement (29%). Only a few parents recognized that the Two-day Weekend system provides opportunity for them to enhancing their relationships with children via better communication and socialization.

In addition, many chatters in website indicated most mothers/parents love two-day weekend but worry that their kids may not be satisfied with their arrangements for leisure activities. The arrangements should be changeable, fun, innovative, interesting, novel, adventurous and unusual. Otherwise, children may complain that the activities are monotonous, boring, and unpleasant. Therefore, pursuing the updated information about recreation becomes very important to modern parents. Most children are happy to enjoy their two-day weekend in general. They may sleep free of intervention, eat delicious food, read novels, watch TV, listen to pop music, talk, or take exercise with the person they like.

In conclusion, people in public domain are willing to enjoy two-day weekend whether they are public officials, educators, enterprisers, or subordinates. However, it is not really optimistic in the private domain.

#### **IV. BEHAVIORAL ACTIONS**

##### **A. People make Friday to be a divide between weekday and weekend.**

A survey included responses from 150 executives with the nations' 1,000 largest companies conducted by Accountemps, a staffing service for accounting, finance and bookkeeping

professionals, executives were asked for their opinions on which day of the week employees are typically most productive. According to the survey, 48% of responses pointed out that the most productive day of the week might be Tuesday, 26% claimed Monday, 9% said Wednesday, and Friday was seen as the least productive day of the week (Katz, 2002).

The situation in Taiwan is quite the same. Friday is less productive in work but more busy in family. People prepare everything for weekend on Friday. For example, they go to their banks to get cash first, then they go shopping in the supermarkets, food stores, grocery stores, and huge sales outlets to prepare for barbecue, camping, hiking, picnic, and so on. They pass through gas stations to fill gas for long trips on Friday evening in urban area and vice versa on weekend in suburban/rural area. Friday becomes a divide between weekday and weekend.

#### B. People progressively use the two-day weekends to relieve fatigues, promote health, enhance interpersonal relationships, and achieve self-actualization.

At the beginning, people identified the two-day weekend system as to relieve stresses and fatigues; they sleep late, watch TV & MTV, sing in karaoke, play in video arcade, and use Internet access at home. Then people take advantage of two-day weekend to improve relationships between family members as well as friends via potluck, picnic, biking, hiking, mountain-climbing, fishing, sightseeing, camping, and traveling on weekends (鄭玉瑞, 1998? 傅前, 1998). In advance, they spend leisure for self-discipline and self-actualization in body shaping, emotional maturity, professional growth, spiritual purification, and public services. Activities for leisure, self-discipline, and self-actualization become the main stream on the weekends.

#### C. The need to improve public services and facilities increases drastically.

People's access to a variety of public services and facilities for leisure, self-discipline, and self-actualization increase drastically due to the implementation of two-day weekend system. These include services and facilities of amusement and knowmation for the public. Such as community parks, national parks, campgrounds, beaches, swimming pools, wildlife sanctuaries, botanic gardens, zoos, libraries, museums, art galleries, opera houses, theaters,

broadcasting stations, cable televisions, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), super highway, Internet freeway, community universities, lifelong learning programs, etc. People ask for improving the related services and facilities in quality and in quantity. For instance, they ask for setting up special weekend buses and narrators in the national parks and improving toilet rooms. Now many recommendations come true such as many toilet rooms in public areas become more comfortable due to sufficient water supply and toilet tissue and regular cleaning services.

D. The tertiary and innovative industries become in great demand.

To meet the needs of recreational activities, several commercial tertiary and innovative industries are getting prosperous. These industries include businesses provide consumers and clients with facilities and services to promote health, fun, taste, intelligence, aesthetics, literary and artistic creation, and/or quality of life. For instances, those industries and services benefit health promotion including gymnasiums, health clubs, health centers, holiday resorts, beauty salons, spas, enterprises providing with green foods and ecological diets, etc. The other industries make people relax and have fun are to provide sufficient and safe services and facilities such as shopping centers, recreation grounds, casinos, cyber cafes, race courses for horse racing, shallow areas for diving, surfing areas, tourists guides, digital subscriber line (DSL), etc. It is urgent and important to improve related facilities and services in quantity and quality as well as to train professionals engage in the tertiary and innovative industries.

E. Web Walking and cyber-loafing become one of the most favorite leisure activities.

The population of Internet access in Taiwan has been over eight million and eighty thousand at the end of June 2002. Web Walking and cyber-loafing become very popular for people on two-day weekend. It helps us update our knowledge and information in general and recreation in particular. Due to people in Taiwan are easy to access websites, cyber schools and online literature become fictitious paths for lifelong learning. Cybermalls and online shopping centers make a wave of "Webonomics" that totally changes consumer's behaviors, money-style, and exchange mode. Cyber cafe becomes a place for young people to gather and cyber-loaf. They stay there everyday which result in quitting their jobs/education



or trouble for their family, schools, and communities. In addition, Internet time compression, web dating, cyber crime, cyberholic, cyber phobia, and Cyberpunk come with the tide of fashion and/or syndromes in the era of Internet. Traffic jams in Internet access and its charge by the minutes cause people to demand that Information Highway be express in speed and par in price.

#### F. Public holidays have been adjusted for implementing Two-day Weekend.

The yearly legal public holiday has been cut from 21~23 days to 14 days in Taiwan since the implementation of Two-day Weekend. The original holidays included 3 days of new year, 6 days of lunar new year, the Women's Day, the Arbor Day, the Youth Day, the Children's Day, Tomb-sweeping Day, Labor Day, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Moon Festival, Confucius' Birthday & Teachers' Day, the National Day, Taiwan Restoration Day, the Late President Chiang Kai-Shek's Memorial Birthday, Dr. Sun Yet Shan's Memorial Birthday, and the Constitution Day. In addition, a deferred extra day off will be taken when the public holiday ran into weekend.

Now the public holiday has been reduced and no extra day off even it runs into weekend. Fourteen holidays are the New Year (1/1), the Lunar New Year (4 days included Lunar 12/30 to 1/3), February 28 Memorial Day, Children's and Women's Day (4/3), Tomb-sweeping Day (4/5), the Dragon Boat Festival (Lunar 5/5), and the Moon Festival (Lunar 8/15), Dr. Sun Yet Shan's Memorial Birthday (11/12), and the Constitution Memorial Day (12/25).

Meanwhile, several enterprises related to people's livelihood also adjust their day off. For example, terminal market of agricultural products in Taiwan actually implemented two days off at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> of every lunar month. Now they have adjusted every Monday off to Two-day Weekend. Garbage collectors in Taipei have Sunday off now rather than 4 day off (during the Lunar New Year) a year before. In addition, the adjustment occurs in schools such as holding students' performance, communications between teachers and parents, and teachers' in-service forums in two-day weekend.

#### G. People strive for efficacy and quality promotion in their work on weekdays.

The growing recognition about spending longer hours on the job may have increased the

chances of gaining weight, smoking or alcohol consumption, and may be putting certain aspects of workers' health at risk. Meanwhile, many professionals' employees are not entitled to overtime pay after a 40-hour workweek. Most of the enterprises and institutions maintain a rigid evaluation to their employees including presence and absence, diligence and laziness, productive and innovative efficacy in their performance. In addition, these enterprises and institutions lay off redundant personnel to increase heavy load of efficient personnel. Therefore, people have to learn how to take more burdens in workweek squeeze rather than learn how to enjoy two-day weekends only. If the employee could not afford the heavy workload, layoff and unemployment will come up in the near future.

#### **IV. Conclusions: Countermeasures adopt by families**

Several other factors together with the implementation of Two-day Weekend System and at least three interrelated factors are the spurs for families to adjust their family life styles. Three interrelated factors are changing economy, changing demography, and changing technology (Presser, 1999). The strategies available for families are as follows:

1. Simplifying family life: There are limited time, energy, and money to deal with everyday life under the fulfillment of Two-day Weekend System. People start to learn how to slow down and enjoy the things that really matter and how to utilize technology in practice. For instance, workingwomen often choose the fast food or eating out rather than meal preparation by themselves at home for their families.
2. Looking for flexible jobs other than a fixed daytime schedule: In response to Two-day Weekend, many businesses are moving toward a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week economy. The widespread prevalence of nonstandard work schedules is a significant social phenomenon. People such as working couples, unemployed middle-aged people, and young new employees, start to find jobs during the evenings or nights, on rotating shifts, or on weekends for earning incomes, health promotion, domestic labor division, and well being of individuals and their families.
3. Taking the advantages of information technology: There are both advantages and disadvantages when people use Information technology. We have to get rid of its

detrimental effects and take its advantages. On positive aspect, people may fully utilize Internet to update knowledge and information for upgrading our quality of life with regard to job searching, money earning, life long learning, leisure activities, parenting, interpersonal relationships, global contact, and so on wherever they are. For example, a studio with sufficient facilities of computer and website at home or near home would be a better idea to run a favorite tertiary and innovative business.

4. Working and getting together with family members at home and outside of the home: Much more attention has been given to family members no matter domestic labor division, leisure activities, income creation, cyber-loafing, lifelong learning. It will benefit family members in the development of potentiality, positive habits formation, and competencies of life management.

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