

Challenges of promoting early childhood education in a rural area of Senegal: A case study of village M

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I. Summary

<English summary>

The purpose of this study is to clarify challenges of promoting early childhood education in a rural area of Senegal by using a qualitative method. To pursue this purpose, a researcher conducted fieldwork in Senegal from August 19 to October 14, 2017.

Nowadays, expanding Early Childhood Education (ECE) is recognized as one of the most important goals for the international society. It is because that international organizations and many governments have paid attention to ECE more than ever since Early Childhood Education (ECE) expansion was included into one of the global education goals at the World Conference on Education held in Thailand in 1990. They consider that it will help to promote every aspect of the development of human beings because ECE has revealed not only its educational but also the social and economic effectiveness. In addition, since the ECE works more effectively with people who are under less preferable environment, expanding ECE is an urgent task to a correct disparity in the world (Waikert, 2015; Hamano and Miwa, 2012). However, few kinds of research concern with ECE in developing countries, especially in Africa. Therefore, it is difficult to know what is happening in the field, but some literature points out that one of the main reasons for the stagnation of ECE expansion is that the priority order of ECE is lower than other areas of educations in developing countries. Because of this situation, ECE in developing countries became too expensive and inconvenient to access especially for low-income families those who are living in rural area (UNESCO, 2007; UNESCO, 2015).

In Senegal, however, ECE became one of the national priorities in 2000, and after that, the government made a lot of efforts to expand ECE. In particular, since there was a big disparity between urban and rural areas, the national policy to expand ECE especially for the rural area was set. As part of the policy, a new type of ECE center named *la Case des Tout-Petits* (CTP) was created. CTP is a community-based ECE center with three functions of education, nutrition and health and they are mostly established in a rural area and suburb. The main CTP characteristic is a quality education with a low fee compared with other types of ECE centers. Thanks to this policy, the disparity between urban and rural areas has been much decreased. For example, in 2002, there were 428 centers in the urban area, while 41 centers in the rural area. In 2013, however, the disparity of the number of ECE center was decreased to 1.470 in the urban and 1.150 in the rural. Nevertheless, the disparity of enrollment ratio didn't improve, such as 1.9% in the urban and 0.6% in the rural in 2002 while 19.8% in the urban and 5.8% in the rural in 2013. According to this reality, we can

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imagine that accessibility and economic reason are not the only cause for the stagnation of ECE expansion in developing countries. In fact, it is said that the idea or the way of parenting varies widely by culture to culture (Harkness et al., 2013) and a content provided in ECE center has a strong influence on a judgment of parents whether they send a child to ECE center or not (Kadomatsu, 2016). Therefore, we have to know what kind of contents do parents expect from ECE center and how do ECE center respond to their demands.

Based on these reasons, a researcher conducted fieldwork which includes document collection and interview to the people involved in ECE, parents, and educators.

<Japanese summary>

本研究の目的は、セネガル農村部における幼児教育普及の課題を質的調査によって明らかにすることである。この目的を追求するために、筆者は2017年8月19日から10月14日までセネガルにおいて、文献収集と幼児教育関係者に対する聞き取り調査、また、ティエス州に位置するM村において現地調査を行った。

幼児教育は、国際目標の一つにその普及拡大が目標に掲げられているように、国際的にも重要性が認識されている。特に、教育的効果以外にも、社会的効果や経済的効果などがあることが明らかになったことから、多岐の分野に及ぶ人間の成長につながるとして、国際機関や各国政府からの注目も高まっている。また、幼児教育の効果の特長として、恵まれない状況下にいる人々がより大きな効果を受けることから、途上国において幼児教育を普及させることが世界の格差是正に繋がると考えられるため、喫緊の課題となっている(ワイカート, 2015; 浜野・三輪, 2012)。しかし、途上国における幼児教育に関する研究は未だ限られており、アフリカ地域に関しては特に少ない。数少ない先行研究を検討したところ、途上国において幼児教育の普及が停滞している要因は、政策的優先順位が低いことが指摘され、そのことによる利用料の高額化や都市集中化が要因となって、特に農村部の貧困層が取り残されている現状がある(UNESCO, 2007; UNESCO, 2015)。

このような背景がある一方、セネガルでは幼児教育が2000年に国家優先課題に設定され、それ以降、普及のための活動が盛んに行われてきた。特に2000年当時、都市部と農村部の格差が顕著であったことから、農村部に向けた幼児教育普及政策が行われた。その一環として、新たな幼児教育施設である子どもセンター(la case des tout-petits)が考案された。この子どもセンターとは、教育・栄養・保健の機能を兼ね備えたコミュニティベースの幼児教育施設であり、農村部に向けて重点的に設置された。特徴としては、他の幼児教育施設と比べて安価な利用料でありながら、質の良い教育が受けられることが挙げられる。そしてこの政策によって、都市部と農村部の幼児教育施設数の差は大きく改善された。例えば、2002年時点で都市部の幼児教育施設が428校であったのに対し、農村部は41校のみであった。しかし、2013年になると都市部1,470校、農村部1,150校と格差がかなり縮まった。ところが、このような改善にもかかわらず、都市部、農村部の就学率の差は2002年の時点で都市部1.9%、農村部0.6%であったのに対し、2013年の時点で都市部19.8%、農村部5.8%と依然として格差は縮まっていない(MEN, 2002; 2013)。このようなことから途上国において幼児教育の普及が停滞している要因は、単にアクセスや経済的問題だけではないことがうかがえる。また、幼い子どもに対する育児観は文化によって大きく異なることがわかっており(Harkness et al, 2013)、提供されている教育内容が保護者の期待に沿っていない場合、家庭の就学判断は不就学になることが明らかにされている(門松, 2016)。つまり、これらのことから、保護者がどのような幼児教育内容を望んでいるかを知る必要があり、また、それらの需要に対し、どのような幼児教育が提供されているかを調べる必要があると考える。

以上のような理由から、筆者は8月中にダカールにおいて文献収集や幼児教育関係者に対する聞き取り調査、9月にティエス州M村において家庭に対する聞き取り調査、10月に子どもセンターにおいて教員への聞き取り調査及び観察調査を行った。

II. Research Activity

II-1 Introduction

Since expanding Early Childhood Education (ECE) was included into one of the global education goals at the World Conference on Education held in Thailand in 1990, international society came to pay much attention to ECE. Senegal wasn't an exception. In 2000, a former Senegalese president, Abdoulaye Wade (term: 2000 - 2012) emphasized the importance of ECE and made it one of the national priorities. Since then, the Senegalese government made every effort to expand ECE all over the country. First of all, they formed an agency, le Ministère de la Famille et de la Petite Enfance, which is in charge of ECE. Due to inefficiency and some problems caused by the involvement of several ministries up to that time, however, the establishment of an agency to be in charge of ECE was needed. Then a new type of ECE center called *la Case des Tout-Petits* (CTP) was created.

Before 2000, ECE in Senegal had a lot of problems, especially regarding the access. At that time, ECE enrollment ratio was only 1.25% over the country. In addition to this, there was a big disparity between urban and rural areas such as that the enrollment ratio in the urban was 1.9% while 0.6% in the rural. One of the reasons for this disparity of enrollment ratio was due to a big disparity of the number of ECE center between urban and rural areas. According to the Ministry of National Education, there were 469 ECE centers in Senegal in 2002 however 428 of them were in the urban area. It means that 91% of them are concentrated in the urban area. Moreover, most of them were private so it was too expensive for low-income families to use ECE center. Because of those reasons, CTP was created and constructed mostly in the rural area to improve the situation. Thanks to CTP and government's effort, ECE situation in Senegal has much improved. For example, in 2013, the number of ECE center increased to 2,620 in total and 1,470 in the urban while 1,150 in the rural area. Therefore, the ratio of the number of ECE center in both of urban and rural areas much improved. Furthermore, the number of public and community center went over the one of private (see Table 1). Thus, compared to in 2002, the number of ECE center which people can use with relatively reasonable price increased. However, looking at the enrollment ratio, there is no improvement of the disparity between urban and rural areas. What is worse, the disparity got widened.

Table 1: Comparison ECE index in 2002 and 2013

	2002	2013
The number of ECE center (urban area: rural area)	469 (428: 41= 91%: 9%)	2620 (1,470: 1,150= 55%: 45%)
The number of private: public and community center	356: 113 (76%: 24%)	1,080: 1,540 (41%: 59%)
The enrollment ratio (urban area and rural area)	1.25% (1.9%: 0.6%)	12.1% (19.8%: 5.8%)

Reference: MEN 2003; 2013

From this data, one important fact should be pointed out that a big gap still remains between the improved disparity on the number of constructed ECE and unimproved enrollment ratio in the rural area. Based on such context, this research aims at clarifying the reason of the stagnation of promoting ECE enrollment in a rural area of Senegal with focus on CTP as a major type of ECE center in the rural area of Senegal.

Research questions

1. What is parent's expectation to CTP?
2. What does CTP offer?
3. What are differences between parent's expectation and CTP offer?

II-2 Study Area

Fieldwork is conducted in M village. M village situates in Thiès region which is next to Dakar region. In M village, there is only one ECE center, that is, only CTP in the village apart from some religious institutions, such as Koranic school called daaras where they accept only small children (approximately from one year old) to offer Koranic education. And also, there is one primary school and one lower secondary school in the village. The total population is 2,168 in 2017 (from the interview in public office). The number of children who is under six years old is 803.

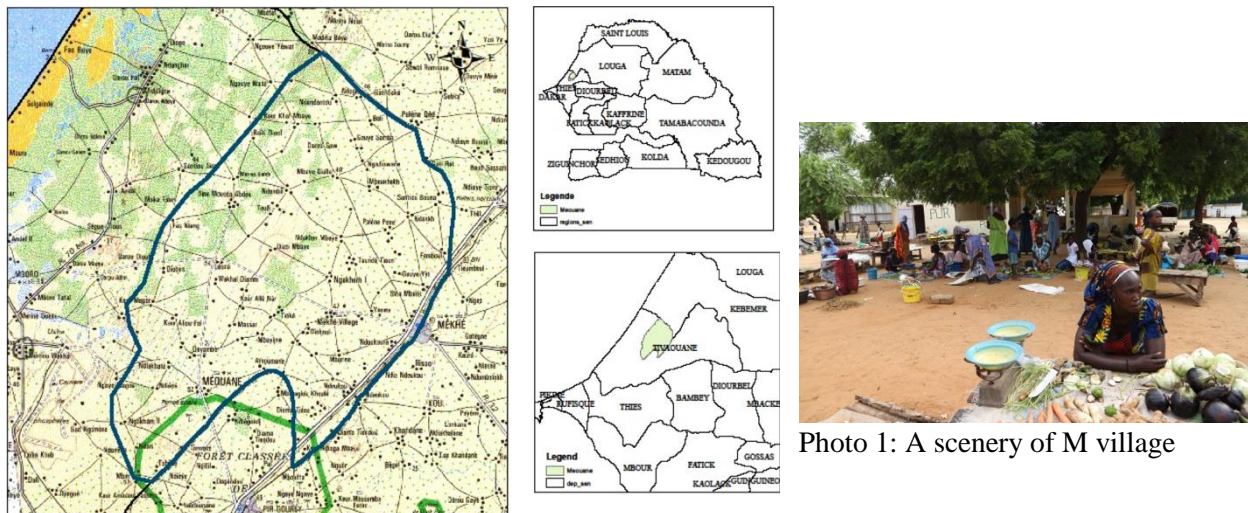


Figure 1: Map of M village

Reference : Bilan diagnostic et programme d'INVESTISSEMENTS PRIORITAIRES DE LA commune de MEOUANE

II-3 Methodology

This research employed a qualitative method. For RQ 1, a semi-structured interview was conducted to parents who have a child who is under six years old using Wolf-French interpretation. An interpreter was a student who is originally from M village and currently study in Dakar. An interpreter and I visited each home and asked a parent to accept an interview. As for RQ 2, a semi-structured interview to educators and an observation were conducted in M village CTP. The interview was conducted in French. About RQ 3, I used the results of the survey of RQ 1 and RQ 2 for the analyzing.

Table 2: An outline of the content of the question

To parents	Basic information about family	The ethnic group, the religion, the family structure, the fortune, the distance between CTP and home
	Information about ECE	Reason why they do or do not use CTP, expectation to ECE, expectation to CTP
	Information about child rearing	Education level which they expect to their children, competence and skills which they want their children to acquire before children go to primary school, child rearing customs at home
To educators	Information about CTP	The establishment years, the opening hours, cost, the number of children
	Information about education	Educators background, the contents of education
	Information about management	The activities of management committee, management budget

In addition to the field work in M village, I collected some documents from l'Agence de la Petite Enfance et de la Case des Tout-Petits (ANPECTP) and in Cheikh Anta Diop University. I also conducted an interview with some people who concern with ECE.

II-4 Research Findings

The number of an informant is 38 in total, and most of the informants are mothers except two grandmothers. Majority of their occupations are housewives who do not have any work and only three of them sometimes have a merchant work without stable income. Though some of them had an education up to certain level (see Table 3), as the majority have never go to school, they cannot speak French and are illiterate. Among informants, the number of parents who send their children to CTP is 14 and who do not send their children to CTP is 24.

Table 3: Informant attribute

informant	Mother (36), Grandmother (2)
Informant's occupation	Housewife (35), Merchant (3)
Informant's academic background	No education (33), primary education (3), secondary education (1), tertiary education (1)

Parents who do not send their children to CTP are divided into three groups, that is, Group Parents A who never send their children to CTP, Group Parents B who have quit sending their children to CTP, Group C parents who will send their children to CTP from this year.

Table 4: Informant groups

Group		The number of informant
A	parents who have never send their children to CTP	10
B	parents who have quit sending their children to CTP	6
C	parents who will send their children to CTP from this year	8

These categories can be divided into more groups. We will see the details each by each.

As for group A, it is divided into four groups according to their reason why they have never sent their children to CTP. That is, A-1) they sent their elder child to CTP but they think that CTP has a problem as to quality, so they decided not to send a younger child there, A-2) they think that religious education is more important than regular education, so they send their child to a religious institution, A-3) they cannot send their child to CTP because of economic reason, A-4) they think that CTP has a problem as to quality.

Table 5: Reason why parents have never send their child to CTP

	Group	The number of informant
A-1	They think that CTP has a problem as to the quality based on their experience of an elder child	5
A-2	They think that religious education is more important	2
A-3	They cannot send their child to CTP because of economic reason	2
A-4	They think that CTP has a problem as to quality	1

As for group B, this group is divided into four groups according to their reasons why they have quit sending their children to CTP. That is, B-1) they think that CTP has a problem as to quality, B-2) they wanted their child to go to primary school earlier, B-3) they think that religious education is more important, B-4) their child refused to go to CTP.

Table 6: Reason why parents have quit sending their children to CTP

	Groups	The number of informant
B-1	They think that CTP has a problem in terms of quality	3
B-2	They wanted their child to go to primary school earlier	1
B-3	They think that religious education is more important	1
B-4	Their child refused to go to CTP	1

As for group C, this group is divided into two groups. That is, C-1) they want to send their children to CTP when their children turn three years old, C-2) they couldn't afford to send their children to CTP last year.

Table 7: Reason why parents will send their children to CTP from this year

	Groups	The number of informant
C-1	They want their children to go to CTP from 3 years old	7
C-2	They couldn't afford to send their children to CTP last year	1

As we can see Table 5 and 6, most of their reasons why they do not send their child to CTP is because of the quality of CTP. In this sense, "quality" means both qualities of the education and quality of the setting. As for the education of CTP, certain parents said that;

"I have sent my elder child to CTP for two years, but there was no significance because my child doesn't speak French even two years schooling. It's obvious that he didn't study anything there. So, I decided not to send younger one there." As for the setting of CTP, some parents said that *"In CTP, there is nothing but a rush mat, so I don't think that children can have a good education there. Also, since there is no toilet for children, if children ask educators to go to the toilet, they make children go home by themselves. Even children pee*

on the way home because they can't bear to do that at home. That's too much". (A part of the interview of a mother in her twenties, September 23)

In addition to these reasons, almost all parents want their children to acquire reading and writing abilities before they enter primary school and they think that these abilities cannot be acquired in a home. Therefore, parents expect educators to teach children reading and writing in CTP rather than singing or dancing. They think that if educators do not teach these things, education in CTP is worthless. However, according to interview with educators, as educators also think that it's important to acquire reading and writing skills before primary school, they apply indirect approach to teach children these skills. They teach these skill to children through singing or doing some games meeting children's development. In addition, according to the observation in CTP, although some parents said that there is nothing such as chairs, tables and some educational materials, in fact, CTP has these things. Like this, parents sometimes are misinformed because they usually get information indirectly from CTP. They get CTP information from neighbors. And also, CTP often neglect to talk with parents. The management community of CTP does not work properly because the system of the management community is dysfunctional. They do not hold a meeting regularly. The M village CTP is almost managed by only educators, and parents are excluded. In this way, parents cannot know about CTP correctly, and resulted in a weak connection between CTP and parents. Moreover, this weak management system leads a severe economic problem of CTP. CTP does not have enough fund to manage itself properly. In M village CTP, one problem is causing another issue like the case seen here.



Photo2: M village elementary school director, director's friend, CTP educators and Dr. Soulayemane YORO (from left)



Photo3: M village CTP

II-5 Discussion and Conclusion

Based on what I mentioned above, I conclude this research as follow. As for the RQ 1 on what is a parent's expectation to CTP, the answer is that parents expect CTP to play a role of a school for small children (under 6 years old). Since most of the mothers do not have any education, they want CTP to teach their children reading and writing on behalf of them. They recognize the importance of learning reading and writing early as one of the keys to access a good education to develop a better life for children. On the other hand, parents do not understand the benefit and effects of singing and dancing. They see these activities as only a fun even though they help and promote the children's development. Therefore, once parents get to know their children are just singing or dancing at CTP, they stop sending them to CTP thinking that CTP

is unuseful. In addition to this, parents also expect CTP to have good educational settings such as tables, chairs and learning materials like other school has. Besides, most of the parents think that religious education is equally important compared with normal education for children.

As for the RQ 2 on what is offered in CTP, the answer is that CTP supposed to offer an education based on the national curriculum, however, it cannot because of the weak institutional management system. In M village CTP, the management community does not work properly and the management is mostly done by only educators. Therefore, this dysfunctional management system leads economic problem to CTP because it cannot collect enough fund from the community, and this economic problem makes CTP education worse due to a lack of insufficient facility and equipment. In this way, one problem leads another problem and make CTP's quality worse.

As for the RQ 3 on what are differences between the parent's expectation and CTP offer, the answer is that since the connection between parents and CTP is very weak, parents tend to misunderstand about CTP. In general, parents get information about CTP indirectly from CTP. They usually get that information from neighbors. This is why they are often misinformed. For example, even though there are tables and chairs in M village CTP, some parents wrongly assume that there is nothing but rush mat. And also, because parents don't understand the effect of CTP's activities such as singing and dancing, they misunderstand that CTP is just useless even though the parents and CTP share the ideas on the expected children's skills to be acquired at CTP before entering primary school. In this way, the insufficient information sharing and miscommunication between parents and CTP bring a gap on a perception of CTP's quality and contribution then cause the issue of low enrollment of CTP. In conclusion, parents should be included in the management community of CTP to improve the function of management system. And also, educators should explain to parents what are the meanings of those activities to children so that parents are able to understand and recognize what CTP offer is not much different from their expectations.

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III. Reflection to the GLTP in Africa

I participated in this program because I wanted to work with a guidance of a local supervisor who is at forefront of my research topic. In fact, in Japan, there are few researchers who are familiar with ECE of Senegal and even it is difficult to find documents related to Senegalese ECE. That is why I thought this GLTP program would be a good opportunity for me to conduct field research with a specialist. And as I thought, I could have many great opportunities in the field. For example, I could get many valuable documents as well as much information which was not available outside Senegal. In addition, I could get much meaningful advice from my local supervisor and his colleagues. That advice always made this research improved and gave me new ideas.

With a kind support of Pro. Soulayemene Yoro, moreover, since I could have an opportunity to present my provisional research finding to the people who work for l'ANPECTP. Fortunately, they kindly appreciated my research as it deepened their understandings of the current situation of CTP in the field since there is still little research conducted using a microscopic viewpoint. Additionally, according to them, my research helped them to realize how much important to hear the real voice of community members especially from parents because they have never conducted a survey to household about ECE. Thus, through this GLTP supported fieldwork, I could reconfirm the significance of this research for the field and it became one of the happiest things I gained through this field experience.

On the other hand, I also had some difficulties in the field. Since my first stay in Senegal was for an internship of JICA, I was in a sort of Japanese cultural environment even though I was in Senegal. In this time, however, I was directly facing the Senegalese culture and life in a developing country. Especially in a place such as M village where there is no modern culture and setting, I came across many culture shocks. For example, water and electricity often cut off and a shower water was almost always cold. And since even some foods in supermarket sometimes were already gone bad, I had diarrhea many times during the stay. Because of these experiences, sometimes I missed my life in Japan badly.

However, culture shocks have not always bad meaning. For instance, Senegalese is opened enough to welcome foreigners. They always treated me like a family member and I could learn Senegalese "Teranga". Teranga is a Senegalese local word, which means hospitality. I found that Senegalese Teranga is somehow similar to Japanese "Omotenashi". So, I was very happy to know that even though Japanese and Senegalese culture are very different, we still have the common value, and furthermore, I realized the enjoyment of culture. In this way, being next to them during this stay, I could know many different ideas and it much influenced the way of thinking of the life with my broadened view.

As I have mentioned above, I had a great time during this GLTP program not only for the research but also for a life experience. I could have great experiences much more than expected through the GLTP program thus strongly recommend those who are interested in Africa or researching on African countries to participate in this program. There are few opportunities like GLTP.

Finally, I would like to mention what I learned through this program and how I will make use of these experiences. As for this research, I would like to present results of this research to the public as much as possible through conferences so that people can understand a real situation of ECE in Africa. I believe that if we want to promote ECE in Africa, first we have to know and understand the reality of the field. I am sure that this research helps people to understand the current ECE situation of a rural area of Senegal. Then this might help to consider how to approach to a promotion of ECE in the field. It goes without saying that this is the first step to achieve SDGs goals, especially goal 4.

Talking about my career, I would like to be a bridge between Japan and Africa as a person who knows both Japanese and African cultures. Because Africa is geographically very far from Japan, and even nowadays, it is still not easy to go to African countries, many people might think Africa does not have any relation with us Japanese and we are totally different. However, African culture is sometimes surprisingly similar to Japanese culture and we can share the same value as I experienced in Senegal. Therefore, I believe that Japanese and African can well understand each other and be much closer.

In addition to this, as you know, Africa is now developing very fast in every aspect, such as the economy, population, and the presence and influence on the world. It is sure that there will be much more opportunities that Japanese and African work together in the very near future not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. As some Japanese companies have already worked with African people or paid much attention to the continent, more companies will try to approach and collaborate with them. Taking such context into consideration, I would like to be a connection as a person who knows both cultures for Japanese and African to be closer and more understands each other. And if I can be such a person, I would like to always think about the development of both sides, Japan and Africa. Although I am still trying to find a way how can I be such a person, I would like to make strong efforts to contribute to the development of the relationship between Japan and Africa.



Photo 4: Dr. Soulayemane YORO and me



Photo 5: Lunch with Dr. Soulayemane YORO, M village elementary school director and his family