

Examination of factors of early childhood care and education (ECCE) expansion in Botswana
: The influence of social structure on the ECCE supply side

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Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is an effectively develops children's physical, cognitive, and non-cognitive skills. Also, investment in ECCE lays the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. However, children's participation in ECCE is persistently low in sub-Saharan Africa, where social development is generally lagging behind, and children are exposed to harsh environment. Botswana is not an exception. Botswana's ECCE gross enrollment rate (21%) is lower than the sub-Saharan average (33%), despite its status as an upper-middle-income country, with a high level of government expenditure on education. This study thus aims to address the societal factors that have prevented Botswanan ECCE from increasing. The Botswanan ECCE is comparable to the take-off stage of the educational expansion theory, where ECCE's autonomy is low. Therefore, the supply side of ECCE plays an important role in terms of quantitative expansion, making it the primary focus of this study.

In the introduction of this study, I discuss the importance of ECCE, particularly from the viewpoint of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In Chapter 1, I begin by introducing an overview and presentencing the challenges of ECCE in sub-Saharan Africa, after which I highlight the weak correlation between economic development and the access to ECCE in many sub-Saharan countries. In Chapter 2, I explain the characteristics of critical realism, which is the paradigm of this study, and present the morphogenetic approach, which constitutes this study's theoretical foundation—following the basis of quantitative educational expansion theory. In Chapter 3, I identify the relationship between Botswana's politics and social development through the diamond industry, explicating the industry's tremendous contribution to Botswana's national economy, as well as the national government's robust and stable position due to its authority within the diamond industry. In Chapter 4, I introduce Botswana's education system and policies and identify its issues, including the fact that development partners' involvement in Botswana's educational development has weakened with the country's economic growth, beginning in the 1980s. In Chapter 5, I describe the ECCE policy, organizational structure, accessibility, and quality, considering the current situation in which children do not benefit equally because the ECCE policy is not legally binding, causing a quality gap in ECCE. In Chapter 6, I reflect on the factors that prevent Botswana's ECCE expansion by comparing it with other sub-Saharan countries. Based on this comparative analysis, I suggest that public policy, especially the involvement and support of development partners, has a greater influence on ECCE expansion than economic development, population size, or any sociocultural factors. In Chapter 7, retroduction, a form of inference, is applied to identify a social structure supported by a diamond-dependent economy and patronage system as the underlying structure that produces a lack of bottom-up ECCE expansion initiatives by non-governmental entities.

Based on these results, I have summarized the relationship between Botswanan society and ECCE expansion as follows.

Before the discovery of diamonds, patronage was a mutually beneficial obligatory human network of cattle owners and farmers in which cattle owners (patrons) offered usufruct rights to farmers (clients), and farmers provided crop yields and supported the cattle owners in exchange. Since the Botswana Democratic Party, which has been

in power since independence in 1966, was founded by cattle owners, the patron–client relationships persist. When diamonds were discovered, the patronage was enhanced by the national government’s (patron) control of the diamond industry. This industry promoted economic growth, which led to the maintenance of a highly centralized national government. The patronage system, based on cattle and agriculture, transitioned into a system based on public goods—such as education, health care, and infrastructure between the national government (patron) and the public (client)—without any fundamental changes to the system’s structure. Ultimately, the national government promoted social development by monetizing Botswana’s diamond resources, allowing the public to reap its benefits. Thus, Botswana’s social development was realized, while the national government gained a solid backing from the people.

However, ECCE was not distributed as public goods in the patronage system. Investment in education, health, and child welfare, which are neighboring sectors of ECCE, was pursued—although the investments went mainly toward HIV/AIDS-infected children and children living in extreme poverty, while investments in education and care for the majority of children below a primary education level were neglected by the patronage system.

There are two types of ECCE expansion: a top-down approach initiated by the national government, and a bottom-up approach organized by non-governmental entities. Botswana’s national government’s policy of ECCE supply is private led, so it does not adopt a top-down approach, although a successful bottom-up approach is not observed either. This phenomenon of having no significant bottom-up approach for ECCE expansion initiated by non-governmental entities (private enterprises, citizens’ groups, municipal governments) is a result of Botswana’s national government’s restraining mechanisms that seek to maintain the patronage system.

Even in countries where social development is delayed, ECCE expansion has a chance of progressing due to the involvement of development partners, as in the case of Malawi. However, for Botswana, the country’s economic growth has caused a withdrawal of development partners, which, in turn, has limited their involvement in ECCE development, constituting one of factors to country’s low ECCE enrollment rate.

This study offers a novel perspective for understanding that the expansion of ECCE is strongly influenced by structural factors embedded in Botswana’s history and society.