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## A Study on the Low Kindergarten Enrollment Rate in the Nu Nationality Inhabited Areas: An Indigenous Case Study Based on the “Cultural - Ecological Theory”

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### Abstract

Since the traditional economic factors cannot fully explain the low kindergarten enrollment in the Nu nationality inhabited area, this paper rebuilds an analysis framework for the low kindergarten enrollment rate based on the “cultural-ecological” theory. With the in-depth investigation on the social culture of the Nu nationality inhabited area and the low kindergarten enrollment rate, from the macro, middle and micro levels of cultural ecosystem, this paper identifies the relationships between social and upbringing convention, local time and space consciousness and kindergarten enrollment rate, and finds that low social developmental level, complete and stable traditional upbringing ecosystem, separation between modern and local time-space are the major reasons for the low kindergarten enrollment rate of the Nu nationality inhabited areas.

**Key words:** Cultural-ecological theory; Low enrollment rate; Nu community; Traditional child rearing; Kindergarten education

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### 1. PROPOSAL OF THE PROBLEM

After the promulgation of *National Medium and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* and *Several Opinions on the Development of Pre-School Education*, the development of preschool education in rural minority areas has become the focus of attention of the governments at all levels. In this context, the Yunnan provincial government has promulgated and implemented the *Three-Year Action Plan on Pre-school Education (2011-2013)*. The *Plan* aims to take a number of approaches, including establish township central kindergartens, optimize educational resources and encourage social forces to set up inclusive kindergartens, etc. to promote the development of preschool education in Yunnan minority rural areas.

In recent years, with the promotion of the “Three-Year Action Plan” and *Developmental Plan to Support Ethnic Minorities (2011-2015)*, kindergartens and preschool education in Yunnan minority inhabited areas have had a substantial increase. From 2010 to 2014, the number of kindergartens in Yunnan minority inhabited areas has increased from 12 to more than 150, of which the “township central kindergartens” invested by the national government account for 90% of the total.

In May 2011, the Yunnan provincial government set up the “Special Educational Subsidy for Minority Poor areas” to support the development of preschool education in ethnic minority areas. It invests 90 million yuan into preschool education each year, and gradually realizes the free preschool education for eight ethnic minorities.

Based on common sense, after the government constructed kindergartens and reduced educational costs, the minority children's kindergarten enrollment rate will increase substantially. However, this is not the case. The project team, when investigated in Nujiang District, Yunnan Province, found that the kindergarten enrollment rate in the Nu nationality inhabited area was far below the expected level, and many township central kindergartens had only a dozen children. In March 2015, In Pihe Village, Fugong County where the majority of Nu nationality live in, only 2% of Nu nationality children getting in kindergartens. In the old Nu nationality villages such as Laomudeng, there are actually no children getting in kindergartens.

Previous studies have generally agreed that economic factors are the main factors for student dropout in the basic education stage, and "cannot afford school fees" is the direct reason that parents choose not to send their children to school. However, the plausible reason of "cannot afford to pay tuition → dropout" cannot explain the low kindergarten enrollment rate in the Nu nationality inhabited areas. The policy of free preschool education seems not to inspire the Nu nationality parents to send their children to kindergarten. Therefore, what causes the low kindergarten enrollment rate in the Nu nationality inhabited areas? Due to the weak traditional interpretations, we need to find a new approach to explore the hidden strengths which hinder the development of preschool education in the Nu nationality inhabited areas.

## 2. CHOICE OF THEORY

When the American anthropologist J. Ogbu explored the reasons for the academic failure of minority students, he constructed the "cultural - ecological theory". The theory not only identifies the roles of society and school in the academic failure of minority students, but also concerns about the impacts of the internal forces of minority communities (Foster, 2004). The methodology and analytical elements of the "cultural-ecological theory" have some inspiration to our study.

### 2.1 Enlightenments of Methodology

The anthropologist Julian Steward who firstly proposed the "cultural ecology" concept believes that, "when people study social organizations and communication methods, they need to examine the cultural environment where the relationships live in, and use an ecological thinking to study these relationships" (Ogbu, 1981). This complex and integral way of thinking directly affects the construction of Ogbu's cultural - ecological theory, and lays a methodological foundation for it.

The cultural - ecological theory includes two levels of meanings: The first is the unfair treatments or misunderstandings suffered by ethnic minorities in educational policy, teaching and educational return,

which are called as the system by Ogbu. The second is ethnic minorities' attitudes toward education. This is because of the history that how and why a nationality became an ethnic minority affects the minority's attitude toward school education. Ogbu call these factors as community forces (Yuan, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by the cultural-ecological theory, this study attempts to apply the theory to explore the root causes of the low kindergarten admission rate in the Nu nationality regions. As Ogbu said, research should "not only want to know the problem, but also try to know the context for the problem" (Yuan, 2008). Therefore, this study places the problem of "low admission rate" into the social and cultural context of Nu nationality for examination. The examination objects include the givers and receivers in the educational and cultural system of the Nu nationality regions, as well as the ecological relationships between various educational factors. The study will not only examine the interactions of internal factors in the Nu nationality kindergartens, but also examine the operational mechanism of the recessive forces in the Nu villages (communities).

### 2.2 Reference of Analytical Factors

Based on the long-term fieldwork on child rearing in different cultural backgrounds, Ogbu deduced an evidence chain affecting child rearing, and constructed a cultural and ecological model of child rearing (Ogbu, 1981) (see below).

Diagram 1: The cultural-ecological model of child rearing

- (A) Effective environments: formation and construction of opportunities, such as economic or material resources
- (B) Culture tasks: survival methods or strategies
- (C) Mainstream adults' cultural types and instrumental skills
- (D) Local theories about individual success
- (E) Local theories about child rearing
- (F) Social organizations and social relations
- (G) Child rearing ways in different places, such as home, recreation place, church and school
- (H) Mainstream children's types and capacities

The cultural and ecological mode diagram of child rearing, on the one hand, reveals the factors constituting a child rearing culture and their relationships, on the other hand, reveals a cultural and ecological chain of child rearing. Ogbu finds that although there are differences in child rearing in different cultural backgrounds, the major

<sup>1</sup> Community force is an important concept in Ogbu's "cultural - ecological" theory. In 1995, Ogbu firstly proposed this concept in his published paper "Community Forces and Minority Educational Strategies: A Comparative Study". Ogbu believes that a minority community's educational creeds and behaviors will ultimately affect the judgment and behaviors of the students, and it can be said that community force is a general term for national culture model, educational goal and educational policy.

factors and internal logic constituting a child rearing culture have a certain universality, which is the sufficient and necessary condition to form a child rearing culture (mode). Ogbu stresses that the studies on child rearing cultures must have a complex and holistic vision based on the local social and cultural background. Therefore, this study will build an analysis framework based on Ogbu’s constitutional elements and logic relationships of child rearing, in particular, place the modern child caring institution – kindergarten into the Nu community culture for investigation and analysis.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Research Methods

This study was carried out through fieldwork, namely, achieve the research purposes through interviews and observations. We need to study the opinions of individuals representing different interest groups on modern nursery education and traditional way of child raising, especially the opinions on the currently popular Christian children’s Sunday schools<sup>2</sup> and state-run kindergartens. The interviewees included Nu preschool teachers, Nu parents, elders, local officials and Nu children, etc.. In order to obtain the real situations of family childhood education, Christian children’s Sunday schools and nursery education in the Nu regions, we adopted emic and etic approaches and participatory observation to understand the real thoughts of the observation objects, understand their various acts, and find the root cause of the low kindergarten enrollment rate as much as possible.

#### 3.2 Analytical Framework

The purpose of this study is to explore the cause of low kindergarten enrollment rate in the Nu inhabited areas, reveal and explain the causality of this phenomenon. We used fieldwork method to identify the elements of causation and the correlations among them; on the other hand, we identified the causal mechanism based on real scenarios. This is an analytical process from description to explanation.

<sup>2</sup> Children’s Sunday school is an important part of Christian religious education, which has 230 years’ history and is the major mode to teach children and new believers. The original purpose of Sunday school is to help the believers look after their children. Later, with the promotion of some Christians, it has become a child caring mode combining religion spread, child care and education. Sunday school was originated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century’s Britain. After 1780, the publisher of Britain’s Gloucester Journal, Robert Raikes, established the first Sunday school in history. Sunday school was popular with the churches in Europe. In 1803, Britain established the first Sunday school association, namely the London Sunday School Union. The early children’s Sunday school curriculum includes Bible teaching, doctrine explanation, reading, writing training, as well as hygiene habit and good manner trainings.

Our primary task is to find out the causal factors of this phenomenon and their relationships. Ogbu’s “cultural-ecological model of child rearing” just provides such a support. The “cultural-ecological model of child rearing” not only demonstrates the mechanism that community culture affects the children’s development, but also presents the structural elements of community culture, namely: The first layer, macro economical and

**Table 1**  
**Analytical Matrix of the Reasons for the Low Kindergarten Enrollment Rate in the Nu Inhabited Areas**

Analytical level	Analytical elements	Causation and analysis
Macro level	Geographical environment and human environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Geographical environment and human environment’s influences on modern preschool education</li> <li>●Historical and current situations of children’s Sunday school</li> <li>●What child rearing method and ecological way have been built by the geographical environment and human environment</li> </ul>
	National policies and the influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Situation of the implementation of national preschool policies</li> <li>●Relationship between state-run kindergartens and Christian children’s Sunday schools</li> <li>●National educational policies’ impacts on the traditional ways of child rearing.</li> </ul>
	The ethnic nationality’s social and historical development level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●As the “directly-entering-socialism ethnic group”, the impacts of Nu nationality’s social development on modern kindergarten popularization</li> </ul>
Middle level	Children’s education in villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Tensions between the traditional childcare culture and modern childcare education</li> </ul>
	Children’s education in religious organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Organization and operation of Christian preschools</li> <li>●Conflicts between Christian preschools and modern kindergarten education</li> </ul>
	Children’s rearing in families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Traditional family child rearing method and operational mechanism.</li> <li>●Conflicts between traditional family child rearing and modern kindergarten education</li> </ul>
	Kindergarten teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Views to Nu parents and children</li> <li>●Views to Nu traditional child rearing culture</li> </ul>
Micro level	Local government officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Views to Christian preschools</li> <li>●Hopes for the future development of Nu children.</li> </ul>
	Village chiefs	
	Nu parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Views to modern kindergartens</li> </ul>
	Christian church chiefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Views to children’s Sunday schools</li> <li>●Views to the implementation of national educational policies</li> </ul>
	Teachers of children’s Sunday school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Hopes for the future development of Nu children.</li> </ul>
	Nu children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Comparison between the developmental indicators of children attending kindergarten and not attending kindergarten</li> <li>●Nu children’s attitudes to kindergarten</li> </ul>

physical environments and the community cultural tasks based on them (A and B); The second layer, community organizational mechanism and educational value orientation (C, D, E and F); The third layer, micro educational places (G, H). The major group's opinions at each layer on kindergarten, Christian children's Sunday school and traditional family child raising ultimately affect their decisions to bring children into kindergarten. Therefore, this study will combine the structural elements of Nu Community and different educational (child rearing) modes for analysis, and build the following analytical matrix (see Table 1) to better identify and explain the causation of Nu children's "low kindergarten enrollment rate".

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Base on the above analytical framework, we carried out fieldwork in the Nu inhabited areas and written a number of filed logs from the macro, middle and micro levels. We found that the major causes for the low kindergarten enrollment rate included the following aspects.

##### 4.1 The Lower Level of Social Development Beings About Nu People's Weak Demand for Preschool Education

In recent years, the Chinese rural residents' demands for preschool education are growing. On the one hand, rural economic development makes the parents come to realize the importance and fundamentality of preschool in children's development. On the other hand, with the acceleration of urbanization, increase of rural migrant workers and increase of rural children left behind, a huge demand for preschool education arises in the rural areas. Those children left behind, due to lack of parental care and appropriate educational environment, mostly have some emotional, behavioral and social development issues and need preschool education to compensate for the lack of family education. However, in the Nu inhabited areas, the low level of social development and less population movement result in the weak demand for national institutionalized preschool education.

Nu nationality is one of 17 "directly-entering-socialism ethnic groups" in Yunnan Province. In China, the "directly-entering-socialism ethnic group" is a generative relation and political term rather than an ethnic nationality or geographic term. It refers to the ethnic nationality which was still in the late primitive stage or the transition stage from primitive commune to class society (the survival of primitive economy) until 1949, after the establishment of China's socialist relation of production, entered into socialism directly with all other nationalities. The counties, townships and villages where the ethnic nationality live and produce in are called as the areas of "directly-entering-socialism ethnic group" (Na, 2008). Before 1949, Nu nationality

was in the late primitive society, and in the 1950s after the People's Government issued a series of national policies, Nu nationality began to enter the socialist society. Since the establishment of P. R. China, Nu people's lives have been much improved with a number of national supportive ethnic policies, but due to their residence place in mountain valleys, inconvenient traffic and poor information, their social development is still at a relatively lower level. Today, some Nu villages still remain the primitive characteristics in production and living due to the inheritance of traditional labor way.

The anthropologist A. Inkeles believes that

In modern society, access to work is very important for people, and the primary task of school education is to make children become future workers... We can say that obtaining a well-paid job by completing school education is a sign of success for modern people. (Inkeles, 1986)

Studying hard to get a good job is the main driving force for children to study. However, for Nu people, the low level of social development causes their lagging behind the current rapid development of the country, and they have not yet formed a proactive consciousness for development. Nu people seem to be very happy to repeat the self-sufficient way of production in their "small world", and are not much interested in changing life style and integrating into modern society. In the interviews, some officials from Fugong county government, Nujiang District talked about this situation:

Compared with other nationalities, most Nu people do not want to leave home for work. The government has attempted to provide supportive policies and financial subsidies to help them upgrade labor skills needed in modern society, and guide them to work in the city to improve their lives, but has not received positive responses. Some of the old Nu people even believed that "it is better to look after children and farm at home than endure hardship and get deceived outside". (Investigation log, April 12, 2013)

Nu people's rejection to modern production and lifestyle and their continuation of the traditional agricultural production mode result in the parents' thought of "study is useless". The parents generally believe that in addition to learning a few characters, "schooling" cannot make children know the skills needed for daily labor, and even if the children go to school out of the village, their fates cannot be changed by school education. The study finds that the junior high school enrollment rate of Nu teenagers is only 35.61%, and senior high school enrollment rate is 3.4%.<sup>3</sup> The majority of Nu teenagers go back to their farms without further study after completing the nine-year compulsory education. It is difficult for them to achieve upward social class and make a living in the mainstream society, so they are not much interested

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Pihe Nu Nationality Township People's Government's Self-Inspection Report of Annual Review on the Popularization of Nine-Year Compulsory Education to Eliminate Illiteracy among Young and Middle-Aged Adults* (December 13, 2014).

in receiving school education. School education also fails to properly play the functions of “selecting” and “distributing” talents.

In the research on the academic failure of the US Castelike minorities<sup>4</sup>, Ogbu finds that the reasons for the academic failure of the Castelike minorities are not the differences in language and culture, but the difficulties to obtain good returns in employment and social status compared to the white race after schooling. They learn that the efforts do not change their low social and economic status, this is why the academic failures occur (Ogbu, 1992). Similar to the findings, the social development of Nu nationality has a big gap with the overall development of the country, and Nu people have a small chance of success in the mainstream society, thus they don't have much expectation to change their fates by receiving school (kindergarten) education. In addition, Nu parents seldom go out for work, and the traditional production method at home ensures the integrity of family child rearing education, so preschool education's compensation function is not prominent in the areas. It can be said that the weak need and dependence for kindergarten education result in the low kindergarten enrollment rate of Nu nationality.

#### **4.2 The Endogenous Childcare Ecology Is Relatively Complete and Stable, the Extraneous Modern Kindergartens Are Difficult to Compete**

Before the appearance of kindergarten, early childhood education of Nu community mainly depends on the traditional parenting practices. The traditional parenting practices can be regarded as a self-contained ecosystem of children's education. Children's educational ecosystem is a complex and adaptive system. “It is complex because it's composed of a number of closely related parts; it is adaptive because it can adjust with a feedback in the face of a constantly changing environment.” (Marten, 2012)

The formation of educational ecosystem is the result of the interactions among people, natural environment and social culture. People come from nature and create social culture, and environment adaptation is one of the engines for social cultural evolution, so children's educational ecosystem inevitably bears the marks of geographical environment, society and history. Since ancient times, Nu people have lived in the territory of Nujiang Grand Canyon with towering mountains and raging rivers, whose geomorphological features can be summarized as “four mountains stand abreast and three rivers divide lengthwise”. Due to the barriers of mountains and canyons, its natural environment has

<sup>4</sup> Castelike Minorities: It's originated from the Castelike class theory in US minority classification theories. Different from the voluntary immigrants of ethnic minorities, these are the involuntary minorities passively involved in the US society, such as the blacks, Indians and so on.

a prominent closed characteristics. The lack of large-scale material flowing and cultural exchanges result in a “endogenous” characteristics of its traditional childcare ecology. This kind of “endogenous” child rearing activities go through the entire family and social lives of Nu nationality, realizing the socialization of its children. Different from it, kindergarten education is the product of large-scale industrial production, whose development is accompanied with urbanization, modernization and a strong “modeling” tendency. For Nu people, it is a “extraneous” education.

Fieldworks find that the Nu endogenous ecosystem of child education is composed of daily life education aimed to inherit Nu's culture and children's Sunday school aimed to spread Christian culture. Daily life education is a situation-based education, reflecting children's living needs, living practices and the purpose of acquiring basic life skills and social culture. In the Nu inhabited areas, Christian children's Sunday school activities are very active. Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, Sunday school activities are carried out, and 75% the children participating in Sunday School are at school age.<sup>5</sup> The teachers are held by two- three female followers, and the course content include *Bible* stories, hymns, sign language dances, reading and simple calculation, etc.. The performance of sign language dances and hymns to churchgoers every Sunday is also an important part of the Sunday School curriculum. In the long-term process of social development, Nu nationality's situation-based living education and Christian children's Sunday school coexist to build a complete and stable early childhood educational ecosystem.

From the perspective of completeness, Nu children's early educational fields include family-based private educational space and Christian church-based public educational space. The latter possesses a number of specialized educational elements (such as teachers, students, curriculum and teaching methods, etc.), fulfills certain duties of public pre-school and fills the blank of public pre-school education in the past. It can be said that before the appearance of kindergarten, the coexistence of private educational space and public educational space achieves the integrity of Nu children's educational ecosystem, and meets the children's triple growing needs (natural life, spiritual life and social life) (Feng, 2004). In interviews, a parent of a 5-year-old Nu child talked about the role of Sunday school functioning as public education

<sup>5</sup> The survey finds that after 2013, the children in Nu villages attending Sunday school included preschool students and primary school students. After March 2013 when the policy of “dismantling teaching points and combining schools” was implemented, the school-age pupils all went to the township central boarding schools and could only go home on weekends. Because too far away from home, some children could only go home once a month. Therefore, in recent years, the major group of Children's Sunday schools in the Nu villages became preschool children.

in promoting the child's life skills and training his good characters. He said:

Our boy has learnt a lot from the teachers of Sunday school. He can sing hymns, dance, tell stories, love others, love Jesus and recognize some Lisu characters. By often going to Sunday school, he becomes thoughtful, often helps the parents do housework, farm work, and has a good relationship between his brothers and sisters. He does not like fighting, and often share goodies with others...In Sunday school's activities, the children should sing hymns. They also perform and sing in front of adults, and slowly become courageous. After they went to primary school, the teachers said that the Nu children could sing and dance, were friendly and open-minded rather than shy and timid like other ethnic children. (Investigation log, January 16, 2014)

From the perspective of stability, the Nu children's educational ecosystem has formed a powerful community force to maintain the operation of the entire system. Nu parents, village chiefs, church chiefs, Sunday school teachers have formed a stable children education group. "This structurally ordered group is an educational magnetic field of interactions, and can become a whole with independent thinking and unified plan because of the interactions." (Sun, 2007) By coordinating various educational forms, the educational group maintains a balance of the entire educational ecosystem. If there lacks sufficient internal or external powers to break the balance, this educational ecosystem will remain stable for a long time. Fieldworks find that the children education group within the Nu village (Nu parents, village chiefs, church chiefs and Sunday school teachers, etc.) has doubted, dissatisfaction and even resistance toward the "extraneous" kindergarten education. In interviews, Elder Lan from L village church expressed his views on kindergarten education:

After the government revoked the primary school in the village, the children had to go to the township central boarding school, and could not attend Sunday school activities as before. These children not attending Sunday school for a long time became bad-tempered and learned quite a few bad habits, some of which were even learnt in school, indicating that school education has some problems and cannot teach children very well. Sunday school can teach the children good habits and good qualities. ... The new kindergarten built by the government has also a poor teaching quality. The teacher assigned to the neighboring village cannot sing, dance, or teach children properly; the children will have on board if they go to the township central kindergarten, and cannot participate in Sunday school, so gradually their moral qualities will decline. I often tell the parents that there is no need to send children to the kindergarten. It's better to go to the Sunday school. (Investigation log, January 18, 2014)

It can be seen that the religionists in the Nu village do not fully agree with national institutionalized kindergarten education, and are very dissatisfied with the "robbery" of their small followers by the boarding kindergarten and boarding school. Since 90% of Nu people are Christian, the religionists make use of their influences to persuade the parents to give up sending

their children to kindergarten. They associate with other local educational groups to form a recessive force to resist modern kindergarten education, which directly hinders Nu children's enrollment in kindergarten.

In summary, due to the natural and historical reasons, Nu society undergoes a slow metabolism and the endogenous children's educational ecosystem remains stable, so extraneous kindergarten has been strictly constrained by the community. It's difficult to implant into the traditional educational ecosystem and reconcile with other endogenous children's educational groups. In addition, certain practices of the local Christian education to "compete for" students directly weaken the Nu parents' initiatives to send their children to kindergarten, resulting in the current low kindergarten enrollment rate in the areas.

#### **4.3 Separation Between Modern Kindergarten's Time-Space Concept and Local Time-Space Concept**

If the external cause for the low kindergarten enrollment rate is the joint resistance of the parents, elders and religionists to modern institutionalized education, then, as an educational institution in the modern sense, kindergarten's modern space-time consciousness separated from the local space-time consciousness is the internal reason for the low kindergarten enrollment rate.

The "cultural-ecological" theory attaches great importance to the role of environment in individual development. The "cultural-ecological" theory's environment not only refers to natural environment, but also refers to social and cultural environment as well as networks which people form in their daily lives.

Daily life has always followed the frame or track of a cultural space-time. A seemingly abstract and pure time and space, in fact, has always been shaped by a culture; People's perception, preparation, deployment and application of time and space has always followed the basic order of life culture. (Zhou, 2011)

We can say that different space-time relationships constitute different cultural ecosystems, and the subjects exposed to the ecosystems thus create different senses of time and space. So, what are the characteristics of the local Nu time-space awareness?

Firstly, from the time perspective, the relatively closed natural environment of Nujiang Grand Canyon and the lower level of social development make Nu nationality still retain the traditional agricultural production and lifestyle. In the traditional agricultural society, social activities are carried out around crops, and people's schedules are arranged based on crop growth rhythm. This time system is called as the "biological time" (Turner, 2003). Nu community's awareness of biological time exhibits fuzziness and randomness, namely they do not focus on specific clock time, have not a strong sense of urgency, and arrange daily diet and labor according to the

position of the sun. Nu children's daily life education is carried out based on natural growth rhythm and changes of the sun and starts. For example, after March, all boys above 6 years old will go learn hunting with their fathers; in summer after the rain, all 4, 5-year-old children will go to mountains with adults to collect Termjite mushrooms, funguses and mushrooms, etc.; In fall after bamboos have been cut, all girls will learn knitting baskets from their mothers and so on. Ordinarily, Nu children arrange their lives, play and work according to the position of the sun. They do not need to arrange their daily schedules according to clocks, nor have to complete learning tasks. In the eyes of Nu children, clock time has a certain significance but is not binding. Their sense of time is not urgent.

Secondly, from the space perspective, the Nu residents living in the traditional agricultural society have a different space awareness from the people living in modern cities, and their understandings toward space still retain the characteristic of pre-modern society. Giddens A. described the space of a pre-modern society, "In a pre-modern society, space and place are always consistent, because for most people, in most cases, the spaces of social lives are subject to 'presence', namely are dominated by regional activities." (Giddens, 2011) Nu children's daily lives are exactly "present" and "local" educational practices, whose contents are a part of local life, and the subjects of education are always in a situation. "External space is an object not requiring the subject to recognize, but to experience and feel." (Gao, 2012) Fieldworks find that many traditional Nu cultural resources are the materials for children's daily education, such as: Nu children's songs *A Mu Le Le*, *Sun Going Out*, *Yang Yang Luo* and *Gu Di Gu Di Golden Dog Barking*; Nu children's dances *Funny Dance*, *Children Playing Walnuts Dance*, *A Crow's Drinking Water Dance* and *Monkeys Fight*; myths *Crow and Gu Yi*, *Frog and Tiger* and so on. These well-known children's songs manifest the "situation-based" educational characteristics: on the one hand they reflect the real lives of Nu children, and on the other hand, they reflect people's reverence toward the nature. The local Nu educational practices do not regard the nature as an abstract and objective world, but a situational space reflecting the harmony between human and nature.

Based on natural environment and traditional production and life, Nu community has formed the space concept characterized by "biological time" and "situational space", and Nu children have naturally acquired such a time-space consciousness in their daily lives. However, as a product of industrial civilization, kindergarten upholds a modern time-space awareness and knowledge system which are totally different from that of Nu nationality. A modern kindergarten's time is not a "biological time" but a "clock time". The daily life of a kindergarten is developed according to uniform standards, and timetable

sets the times of coming, leaving, eating, sleeping and each lesson (activity). For Nu children, clock time is abstract, and time no longer means "sunrise and sunset", "changes in four seasons", but "have class" / "finish class", "go to school" / "leave school". When teachers follow these rules, they also constitute an urgent and interlocking living rhythm for the children. In addition, modern kindergarten's educational space also reflects the "abstract" and "absent" features. Some scholars believe that school education, based on the purpose of modernity, does not have a situational space but a variety of symbolic marks, expert systems and trust mechanisms. In modern spaces, the relationship between human and nature has been reconstructed, and the traditional educational space's "present" and "entitative" features have disappeared, instead there is a more abstract "functional" and "mobile" relationship between educational subjects and space. Learning space, work space and living space are separated due to different functions, and people move repeatedly in the different spaces (Ibid.). Similarly, the space design of kindergarten in the Nu areas also has the "abstract" and "absent" characteristics.

Firstly, the creation of kindergarten's educational environment is separated from Nu nationality's traditional culture. Kindergartens at the Nu inhabited areas have standardized construction, whose architectural style is basically the same with primary school without any local cultural features. Kindergartens' walls are either decorated with some popular cartoon images or pasted with some so-called "quotes of famous people" encouraging children to study hard. The teachers' clothing, language and curriculum also have nothing to do with the Nu culture. Kindergarten education is no longer placed in the local scene, and the abstract space of kindergarten makes children feel strange and anxious. Some parents said that they gave up sending their children to kindergarten because the children were difficult to adapt. A lot of Nu children often cried after got in kindergarten for a couple of months, and could not adapt well to the learning and living there.

Secondly, township central kindergarten and preschool founded by the government are far from the Nu villages, and boarding system contradicts the traditional Nu parenting practices. The "absent" characteristics of the township central kindergarten and preschool are performed as the real distance in space. In Pihe Village, for example, the nearest Nu village to the township central kindergarten is 4 km away, and the farthest village is 20 km away. In order to expand the central kindergarten's radius, in 2012 Pihe Village Central Kindergarten offered boarding service for remote families, and eliminated the associated costs of boarding. However, this "considerate" initiative did not significantly enhance the enrollment rate of Nu children, and the reason is the contradiction between the traditional Nu custom of "does not raise children far from home" and the boarding management.

Nu nationality's traditional parenting practices go against parents' separation to children, and the Nu young people will not easily leave home once get married and have a child. Fieldworks find that there are almost no children left behind in Nu villages, and some villages (such as Laomudeng Village) have a zero ratio of children left behind. In interviews, several young people who had worked outside said that they would not leave for work once they have children, nor send their children to a far-away place, and were never willing to let the children board in kindergarten. It can be said the "absent" characteristics of the kindergartens in Nu areas are an important reason for the low enrollment rate.

In summary, the reasons affecting the low kindergarten enrollment rate of Nu children are complex. Since the traditional economic factors cannot fully explain this phenomenon, the study rebuilds the analytical framework based on the "cultural - ecological" theory. Through in-depth fieldworks, we find that the low social developmental level, traditional child upbringing ecology and local time-space consciousness are the important factors affecting children's admission in kindergarten. The study analyzes these factors and their mutual relations, and reveals the hidden forces of different cultural ecosystems affecting the low kindergarten enrollment rate. Through the analysis, we realize that the low kindergarten enrollment rate cannot be simply solved by building more kindergartens, investing more funds or teaching children some "useful" knowledge. Nu nationality's unique social, cultural and historical backgrounds have created the particularity of the children's low enrollment rate in kindergarten. Therefore, the development and implementation of preschool education policies at Nu areas must be based on Nu community's developmental level and educational needs, and avoid using a single, universal method for resolution. We should use the methodology of the "cultural-ecological theory" to comprehensively improve Nu children's kindergarten enrollment rate and preschool educational qualities from multiple dimensions.

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