

POLICY BRIEF

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Better Leadership, Better Teaching: Strengthening Teaching Quality in Early Childhood Education

BACKGROUND

Early Childhood Education (ECE) lays the foundation for children's future learning and development. Good teaching depends on teachers, learning materials and infrastructure. It also depends on good leadership.

ECE leaders guide teachers, provide support, manage resources and set priorities for teaching. In Kenya, county governments manage ECE services. However, limited resources, weak supervision and gaps in teacher support can affect teaching quality. The review found that strong leadership supports good teaching, teacher motivation and inclusive learning. Weak leadership can lead to poor and inconsistent teaching and limited support for children with different needs.

THE ASK



PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION · COUNTY ECDE DIRECTORATES & QASOs

Institutionalize regular, structured teacher supervision.

Conduct at least one structured supervision visit per term, with practical, documented feedback for improvement. This is the single strongest lever in the evidence: teacher support and supervision was the leadership practice most consistently linked to better instruction, featured in 8 of the 18 studies examining leadership's effect on instructional practice more than any other mechanism reviewed.

This only works alongside three supporting actions:

ECDE DIRECTORATES

Train ECE leaders.
In instructional leadership, teacher mentoring and inclusive education.

HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS

Strengthen collaborative teaching.
Through regular teacher planning meetings and shared instructional decisions.

COUNTY ECDE DIRECTORATES

Strengthen accountability.
With a common framework for monitoring instructional quality.

METHODOLOGY

The study reviewed 28 empirical studies on leadership, management and learning in ECE, using a structured selection process. Of these, 18 studies specifically examined how leadership and management shape instructional practice, this brief, and the recommendation above, draw on that subset. Findings were grouped into three areas:

28 Empirical studies reviewed on ECE leadership & management	18 Of these examined leadership's effect on instructional practice	3 Mechanisms identified within that evidence
Teacher Support & Supervision (8/18)	Leadership Direction (4/18)	Management & Governance (6/18)

KEY FINDINGS

8 of 18 studies Teacher Support Improves Teaching	4 of 18 studies Clear Direction Shapes Teaching	6 of 18 studies Good Management Supports Consistency
Regular supervision (6/18) and leadership's role in teacher motivation and collaboration (2/18) were linked to better instruction — the largest single group of studies.	Leaders who set clear expectations and instructional vision improved teacher motivation and inclusive teaching.	Resourcing aligned to teaching priorities (3/18) and clear organizational or governance structures (3/18) improved consistency across centres.

“Teacher supervision is the strongest single predictor of better teaching.”

Of the 18 studies examining leadership’s influence on instructional practice, 8 pointed to teacher support and supervision, nearly twice as many as any other single mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Teaching quality depends on effective leadership most directly through supervision. Institutionalizing regular, structured teacher supervision, backed by trained leaders, collaborative planning, and clear accountability, will enable ECE centres to deliver better teaching and improve children’s learning outcomes.

Source: Saoke, V. O., Chege, W. L., Chege, W. L., Okal, J., Mburu, J. M., Olao, E. M., Ndolo, O. E., Tsuma, F. A., Nyaga, F. W., & Natasha, W. (2026). The Influence of Leadership and Governance Practices on Learner Experiences in Early Childhood Education Centres in Kenya: A Rapid Evidence Review. Discover Education.

