

POLICY BRIEF

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Leadership Drives Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

BACKGROUND

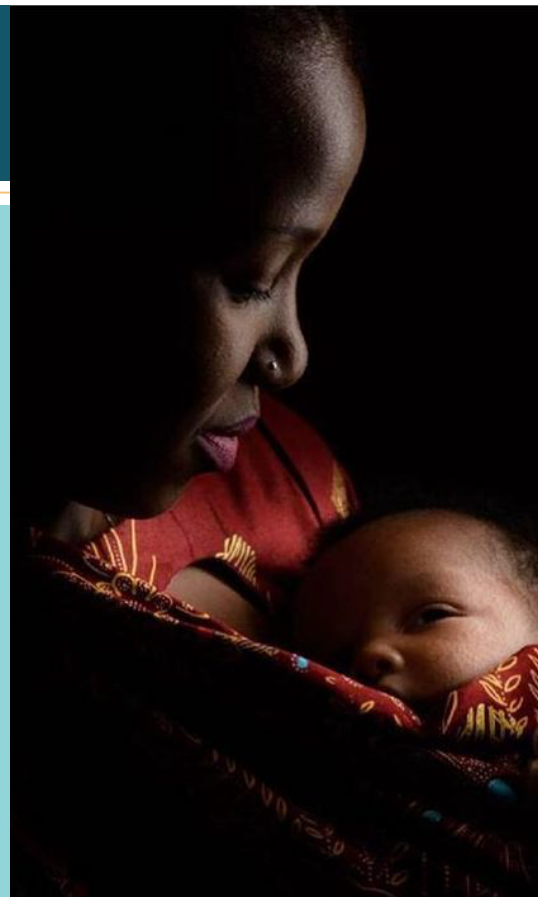
Parental involvement supports children's learning, attendance, well-being and development. The review shows that leadership and management strongly influence how parents participate in ECE: effective leaders communicate regularly, create opportunities for participation and coordinate resources, while weak leadership, poor communication and limited follow-up result in low and irregular parental involvement.

PRIORITY ACTION

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION· KEMI, WITH COUNTY ECDE DIRECTORATES

Build leadership capacity for parent engagement.

Strengthen leadership training in parent engagement and partnership-building, so every ECE leader can plan, communicate and follow up consistently. This is the single strongest lever in the evidence: leadership capacity was the mechanism most consistently linked to sustained parental engagement, cited in 9 of the 21 studies examining leadership's influence on parental involvement more than double any other mechanism.



This only works alongside three supporting actions:

COUNTY ECDE DIRECTORATES

Strengthen communication.

Require every ECE centre to hold regular, two-way communication with parents.

ECE CENTRE MANAGERS

Institutionalize participation.

Hold regular parent meetings, workshops, and involve parents in centre decisions.

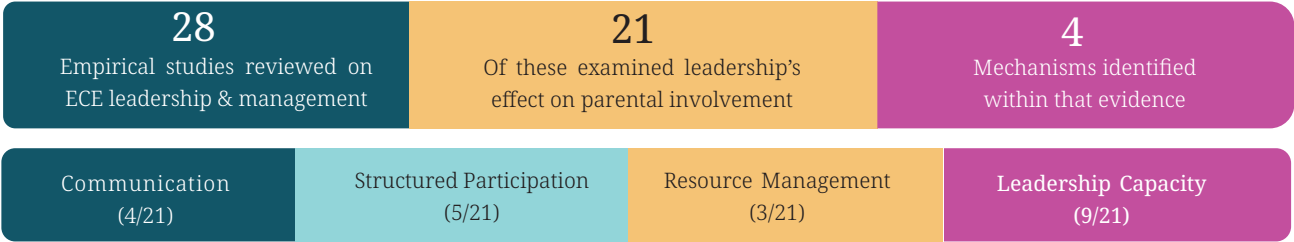
COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)

Improve resource management.

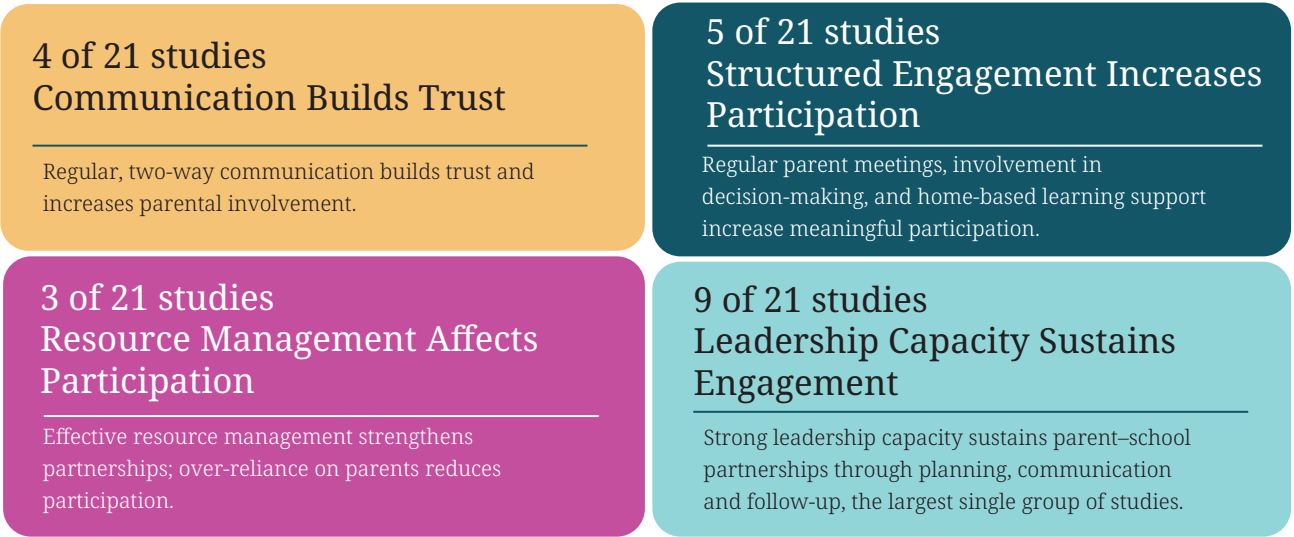
Address resource gaps and reduce over-reliance on parental financial contributions.

METHODOLOGY

The study reviewed 28 empirical studies examining how leadership and management practices influence learner experiences in ECE centres in Kenya. Among the reviewed studies, 21 explicitly investigated the role of leadership in shaping parental involvement. This brief, together with the recommendation presented above, is informed by findings from this subset of studies. The evidence was organized into four key thematic areas:



KEY FINDINGS



“Leadership capacity is the strongest lever for lasting parent engagement.”

Of the 21 studies examining leadership’s influence on parental involvement, 9 pointed to leadership capacity — more than double any other single mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Parental involvement depends on leadership capacity above all. Building leaders’ capacity to plan, communicate and follow up backed by stronger communication, structured participation and fairer resource management will make parental involvement more meaningful, inclusive and sustained.

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.