

**EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION ON
LEARNING OUTCOMES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNERS IN MASINGA SUB-
COUNTY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Free Primary Education has been riddled with challenges ranging from instructional materials, school facilities and low staffing levels to cater for the influx of learners. As such the quality of FPE has been compromised. Thus, the study intended to examine the effectiveness of FPE on learning outcomes of ECDE learners in Masinga Sub-county, Machakos County, Kenya with focus on instructional resources, school facilities and staffing levels. The study was guided by the The Human Capital Theory. The study adopted mixed methods approach since it involved collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The study applied explanatory sequential design which involved collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires were used to collect data from head teachers and ECDE teachers whereas focused group discussions were used to collect data from parents' representatives. Piloting of research instruments was conducted to establish validity, reliability, credibility and dependability. Reliability coefficient was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Method. The target population for this study comprised of 45 head teachers, 494 ECDE teachers and 540 parents' representatives all totaling to 1079. Using The Central Limit Theorem, 13 primary schools, that is, 28.9% of 45 and 300 respondents (27.8% of 1079) were sampled. Stratified sampling was used to create 5 strata based on the number of zones in Masinga Zone. From each zone, 2 head teachers and 28 ECDE teachers were selected using purposive sampling whereas 30 parents' representatives were selected using simple random sampling. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents and to illustrate the general trend of findings on the various variables that were under investigation. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically whereas quantitative data was analyzed inferentially using ANOVA in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 21). The findings of the study were presented using tables. The study established that FPE programme was a major milestone in the country's education system as it opened the doors for children to access education. FPE also provides instructional resources in most ECDE centers in order to enhance learning outcomes of ECDE learners. These include; books, teaching aids such as realia, charts, audio-visuals and concept videos/DVDs. FPE policy is also responsible for provision of school facilities such as classrooms, resource centers and libraries to enhance learning outcomes of ECDE learners. The study thus recommends that ECDE teachers should adopt instructional resources suitable for enhancing every aspect of learning outcomes amongst ECDE learners. The policy should give guidelines on admission criteria and class sizes. The policy should also provide for the needs of children with disabilities. The government should define various roles of stakeholders like teachers, parents and the inspectorate unit. The government should recruit more teachers as a way of motivating them, so that they can take their teaching work more seriously. Modalities should be designed by government for involving parents and other stakeholders towards the construction and rehabilitation of school facilities such as classrooms, toilets and desks.