

EFFECTS OF BUDGETARY ALLOCATION ON PROVISION OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

¹ Francisca Wanza & ² Dr. Wilson Muna, PhD

¹ MPPA Student, School of Law, Arts and Social Sciences, Kenyatta University, Kenya

² Lecturer, Department of Public Policy and Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. Primary data was adopted in the study, being collected by use of semi-structured questionnaires, from a targeted population of 378 participants, including parents' representatives, teachers and ECD county officials from Machakos County that was involved in the study. Systematic random sample technique and stratified sampling were chosen as the sampling methods that resulted in a sample of 114 participants. The gathered data was organized, connected and coded into qualitative data, then the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was computed using inferential and descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included percentages, frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics included Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression. The model employed was statistically significant to giving an explanation on the effect of budget allocation on the provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County. The results revealed that budgetary allocation had a positive and significant accomplishment on the provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. A unit improvement in budgetary allocation was associated with an increase in the provision of education. The study concluded that the provision of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) in Mavoko Sub County in Machakos County was heavily influenced by the triumvirate of budget allocation. The study thus recommended that the policy makers should prioritize and increase the allocation of the budget to pre -primary education. Policy should also focus on ensuring that adequate funds are provided for the construction, maintenance and upgrading of educational infrastructure, and for the procurement of quality teaching and learning materials.

Key Words: Budget Allocation, Pre-Primary Education, Machakos County

INTRODUCTION

Investment in human capital through education, training and skills lies a strong bedrock of economic value of workers in the world (Kenton, 2023). Any nation that has experienced tremendous economic growth and progress had to invest in human capital due to its essentialism (UNESCO, 2010). Education and a nation's total economic growth are positively correlated. A study by Akindele (2019) on education and GDP, revealed that one additional year of education for the labor force boosts the GDP by up to 9% in the initial year and 4% in the following three years. According to Woodhead (2022), it is understood that education is a critical component of development. It is a crucial pillar in determining the type and rate of socioeconomic growth in every country. The process of transmitting knowledge, abilities, and attitudes is known as education (Eshiwani, 1996). It aids to improve the labor force's capacity for production (Woodhead, 2022).

Pre-primary education is the basis for the subsequent academic attainment and marks the genuine start of official schooling for all kids, (Akindele, 2019). Individuals who start primary education without first attending ECE go through a lengthy time of uncertainty, worry, and without enjoyment than those who enter primary school after attending ECE (Otieno 2022). Early infancy is vital for a child's fast growth in all facets of health (biological, mental, and social). The degree about the future growth and development of a child's body and mind will be greatly influenced by the quality of care and instruction they get at this critical age of 0-8 years (Akindele, 2019). Because crucial development takes place in all fields throughout the embarkation of a person's life, they are particularly significant. Several studies indicate early childhood development aids in the structural development of the brain (Saadia A.K., 2010)

Kenya's government acknowledges the significance of early childhood education is an essential key lever for a quick achievement pertaining EFA and the MDGs (UN-OCHA, 2022). Furthermore, the government of Kenya (GOK) and its cooperating partners have made a tremendous effort to improve the welfare of Kenyan children in response to the 2002 recommendation (MOE report, 2008).

In Kenya, the constitution has stipulated provision of Pre-Primary education as a devolved function (Kenya constitution, article 56). The county governments are tasked with the role of ensuring access to the Pre-primary education by constructing adequate infrastructure, employing, in-servicing and remunerating teachers, monitoring quality of education and adhering to the guidelines of ensuring that learning environment is safe for the learners and the operations of the program are running smoothly, observing quality health and nutrition as well as safety and protection of learners (Marete, 2018). Owing to this, the issue of quality education that is low at Machakos County should have been addressed by the devolved government (Kenya constitution, article 56). The county government of Machakos in this regard formulated a pre-primary education policy as a guide to provision of early years education. Researcher therefore studied the effects of Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy on provision of preprimary education Machakos County of Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The county governments are mandated by Kenyan constitution to provide quality pre-primary education to all children within the county (Kenya constitution 2010, art, 56). But pre- primary education remains of low quality, with limited access and offered in deteriorated infrastructures (Mukonyo, 2018). Several studies have been conducted on pre-primary education in Machakos county, for example, a study by Mutiso (2014) on the role of devolved government in implementation of Early grade learning, a study by Mukonyo (2018) on challenges faced by ECE teachers in Machakos county, study by Kenpro (2014) on challenges facing early grade education in Kenya: a case study of Machakos county. There is little known about the effects of (ECDE) policy implementation on provision of pre-primary education Machakos County, Kenya. The researcher therefore did a comprehensive analysis and estimated the effects of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya.

Study Objective

This study examined the effects of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. The following question guided the researcher in the study:

- What is the effect of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation of Pre-Primary Education Policy

Around the world, every education program is governed by law, it follows specific guidelines called policy that provide direction on its implementation (Stella, 2011). According to Shannon, (2018) a policy, as the course of action of government or official institution, provides goals, principles and plans that guide the activities of different sector, with an aim to achieve a specific compliance. The deep argument by Stella, (2011) on policy, is to a large degree accepted and used to explain the concept of educational policy, as the guidelines that aim at elevating the quality of education and the performance of teachers at every learning institution.

Trawler (2003) expounds that specific principles and actions in relation to educational affairs are contained in educational policy, are followed and designed to bring out desired and expected goals in the education sector. From their argument therefore, early childhood educational policy can be termed as the specific guidelines that provide direction on the perpetration of teaching and learning to the early children. The guidelines provide the goals of the ECD education, the principles and the action plan for the government overseeing the ECD program. In Machakos County, ECDE policy seeks to enhance access, quality, equitable, all-inclusive and relevant early years education services. (CG of Machakos, pre-primary education Policy, 2019)

The policy was formulated for the purposes of aligning ECDE and training with vision 2030, the 2010 constitution of Kenya and other international protocols. The document provides guidelines on instituting, indexing, administration and answerability of ECDE centers across the county. (Muange, 2019). A great mile is expected to have taken shape on the pre-primary education in Machakos County, but there is no study in record revealing how the policy on the ECDE program in the county is influenced, hence need for this study.

Provision of Pre-Primary Education

Quality ECE has been factored as an important aspect that contribute to the success of a child (Eduedify,2022), this secret was long realized by the developed countries, in these countries, pre-primary education is made available by either the government or by self-proprietor, but the monitoring of quality is a core role of the government, hence it is of high standard(Eliud,2018) A report that was compiled by UNICEF(2019) ranking global countries according to how best they provided ECE education, revealed that Finland has the best ECE system in the world. Finland was lauded for her equity in education, that, the system allowed access to highly values education irrespective of the child's competences and background. Finland's high PISA_(Programme for International Student Assessment) score show that their students performed better due to the nature of the system: that include small sized classes which encourage one to one teacher learner attention, qualified and well-paid teachers, early grade curriculum that promotes problem-solving and critical thinking skills. In Australia, there is a high demand for ECE education, this is because the country has a strong based economy and a heightening population (Lex, 2020), the government is committed to ensure a mandatory access to ECE and to maintain its quality. (Edu edify report, 2022).

In developing countries of Africa, variety of philosophies exist explaining how youngsters should be educated, each country has its own approach which is different for others, an example being South Africa, a country where there exists a bimodal distribution in ECE education results when learners from the rich socioeconomic quintile perform better with those from poor quintile performing poorly. The main cause according to Lieschen (2022) being the dysfunctional system of education.

In East African countries, each independent government monitors the quality of education constitutionally (Mosenda, 2023). UNESCO (2018) published that In Kenya, the ECD policy was formulated in accordance with the goals of the National education Framework, a policy for improving Education in the country. Pre-primary education involves learning from year 1 to 2 for the children ages 4 and 5 respectively, ages that differ for children with special needs and disabilities. (UIS, 2012)

County governments are tasked with the role of ensuring access to the ECDE following the guidelines in ensuring there is safe school environment and smooth running of the operations of the program, observing quality health and nutrition as well as safety and protection of learners (Marete, 2018). Adhering to the policy to the latter by the county governments expected to guarantee provision of quality education (MKSC, ECDE Policy, 2019)

In the contrary, quality of the pre-primary education remains a challenge, access to the early childhood education seems limited especially in counties like Machakos County (Kiilu, 2018). In Machakos county, cases of low enrolment, poor feeding program, poor sanitation and access has been witnessed (Wangila, 2017), factors that are raising the alarm and urgently calling for an assessment on the of the policy, as well as a study to evaluate the implementation of early childhood education policy and how it is affecting the provision of the pre-primary education.

Budgetary Allocation

Over the world, every government allocates funds to support ECE due to its importance to the child. In US, for instance, federal agencies receive funding from the Congress, funds commonly known as budgetary resources (Austin, 2019). According to [Usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) (2023), the department of education received \$174.97 Billion to be shared among the 10 sub components to support ECD education. In India, the budgetary allocation for ECE is done by the government, an average of 0.1 per cent of the GDP expenditure (Protiva, 2023). An African developing country like Tunisia, the government gets grants and loans from World Bank as well as allocates 20% of her budget to the ministry of education to support education, with an emphasis on the pre-primary education of learners between 4 and 6 years (unwomen.org report, 2021)

In Kenya, county government get their major financial share from the national government, where by each financial year the national government allocates funding to all counties for statutory allocation, including pre-primary education (Mputhia, 2021). In the year 2021/2022, Machakos county received an estimate of 12.9 billion Kenya shillings from the national (Treasury.go.ke, 2021), with a total of 48 million set aside for upgrading the ECDE infrastructure within the county. (Kilonzo, 2021) This has been the trend since the inception and operationalization of the devolved government in 2012 (Klrc, 2013). An assessment by Kiilu (2018) on county projects revealed that, there were feeding programs in a few ECDE centers in Machakos County that 16% of the public ECDE centers had county employed teachers and none of the centers had a modern class with chairs and tables. There is no study that has henceforth evaluated the effect the ECDE policy implementation has on the pre-primary education programs. This therefore calls for this study, to help provide an answer to the question of how budgetary allocation influences the provision of ECE.

Theoretical Frame Work

The sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory of child development is a paramount theory in child education that was propelled by Lev Vygotsky (1978). A theory that is based on the idea that human activities occur in a cultural context, with language and symbolic structures influencing to a great extent. The theory explains how pre-primary children learn using the two concepts of zone of proximity development (Shabani et al, 2010) and cultural instruments near the child (Saracho, 2017).

The theory affirms that children's environment should encourage practical for the pre- primary learning. It must be founded on daily occurrences and practices of their locality, at school and at home (Saracho, 2021).

The researcher used the theory in the study to help bring out the concept of a stimulating learning environment that should be put in place at Machakos County.

Conceptual Framework

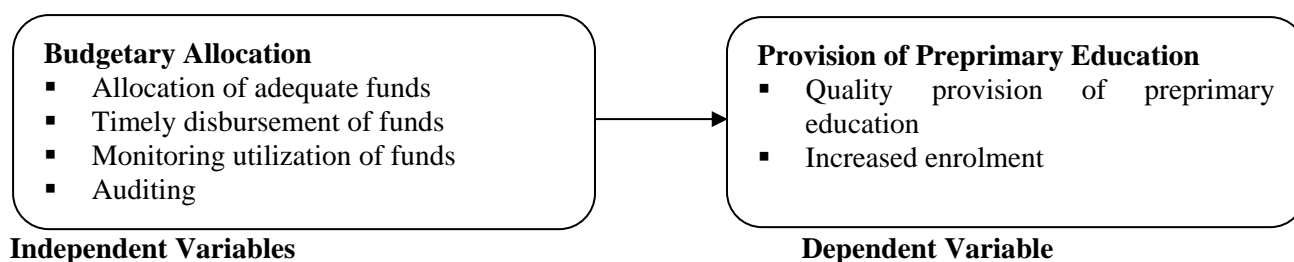


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher, 2023

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive cross-sectional design was employed in this study. It analyzed the effects of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County. The study target population consisted of 165 education teachers of ECDE from Mavoko Sub-county, 165 parents' representatives and 48 county ECDE officials in Machakos County between 2007 and 2021. The group was purposefully chosen owing to their knowledge of the research topic, which led results legitimacy.

The researcher used stratified random sampling to collect data from of 165 education teachers of ECDE, 165 school committee members and 48 county ECD officials. The researcher employed randomization system to screen targeted population to ensure those eligible for use in study fairly represent the whole population. The size was used to tell the researcher the number of schools to choose from the population of interest. To ensure that only those with pertinent information for the study was included in the sample, the researcher used a purposive sampling strategy.

Semi-structured questionnaire were used for data accumulation in this study. This was used to collect responses from sampled population. The secondary data was gathered from county publications, books and journals while questionnaires were used for assembling of primary data. The sampled ECDE teachers, school parents' representatives selected from Mavoko Sub County and ECDE county officials were given questionnaires to fill out in presence of the researcher, it was assumed that they would have the literacy skills to decipher the questions and provide the necessary responses. Respondents reacted to a series of statements provided in a questionnaire, by ticking appropriately on a Likert scale on effects of Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies on ECD program implementation in Machakos County, Kenya.

To guarantee that all abnormalities were discovered before being exposed to analysis, Methods of Data Analysis were carried out by evaluating the completeness of questionnaires filled out by respondents during pilot study. The actual data collection followed the pilot study, the data collected was analyzed using content analysis, which entails a thorough description of the sample's items. The gathered data was organized, connected and coded into qualitative data, then the qualitative data was computed using the SPSS program version 22.00.

RESULTS

ECDE Policy and Provision of Pre-Primary Education

Budgetary Allocation

The objective was to examine the effects of budgetary allocation on provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. The ECDE teachers, parents and County officials were all asked they were aware of budget allocation on provision of preprimary education in Machakos County. In response, all the respondents

coincided that they were aware of budget allocation on provision of preprimary education in Machakos County. This indicated high level of awareness and interest among these stakeholders in the provision of preprimary education. Teachers, parents, and officials being aware of the budget allocation suggests they are invested in and pay attention to matters relating to early childhood education.

Since all the respondents were aware of the budget allocation on provision of preprimary education in Machakos County, they were asked to indicate how they came to know about the budget allocation. Their answers were as they appear below.

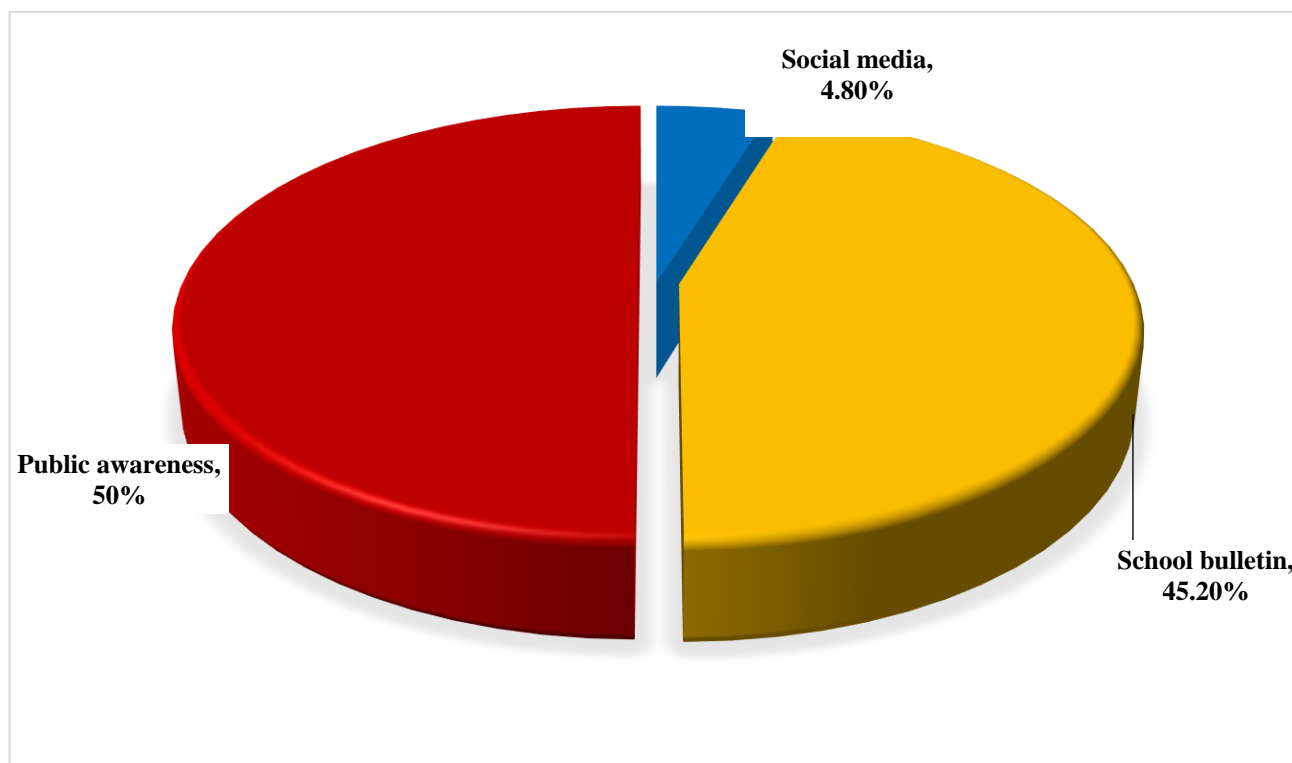


Figure 2: Source of Information Regarding Budget Allocation

According to the findings on the above figure 1, most of the participants indicated that they came to know about the budget allocation through public awareness campaigns (50%). This implied that county officials are actively conducting campaigns to educate the public about important matters like the budget. This shows effective public engagement by the county. School Bulletin was second most common source of information (45.20%). These bulletins likely provide detailed information about school operations, including budget allocations. It shows that schools are an essential point of contact and communication for stakeholders.

Finally, only 4.8% of the participants indicate social media as the source of information. This mode of communication had the least reach, as per the data. This might suggest that social media platforms are not extensively used for this purpose in Machakos County. This could be due to a variety of reasons, such as low internet penetration, preference for other sources of information, or not many education-related updates being shared on social media. The respondents were further asked if parents were paying user fee in the ECDEs in the sub county. All the respondents agreed to this.

Using a Likert scale, the researcher pursued to measure the level of budgetary allocation towards ECDE education in the study area. Table 1, summarizes findings on budgetary allocation based on the opinions of ECDE teachers.

Table 1: Teachers' Opinions on Budgetary Allocation

	Mean	Std. Dev
The county government allocates adequate funds for ECDE projects	1.81	0.51
The disbursement of funds is done on time by the county government	3.81	0.4
The county government monitors closely on utilization of funds disbursed.	3.38	0.79
Auditing is done after every ECDE project is completed.	2.02	0.35
Parents pay user-fees fully to enable smooth running of ECDE programs	2.76	1.1
The head teachers plan well on utilization of the allocated funds	2.76	0.79
There is transparency and accountability by the school management on the utilization of ECDE funds.	3.67	0.48
Teachers are well remunerated as per the contract.	3.76	0.43
Overall Mean	2.996	

Descriptive results in Table 1 showed that the respondents showed a high agreement that the county government allocates adequate funds for ECDE projects, with a mean of 1.81 and a standard deviation of 0.51. This suggests that the plurality of teachers felt that the funding provided was sufficient. Regarding the timely disbursement of funds, the teachers expressed a neutral to negative stance, with a high mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.4. This indicates that most teachers had concerns about the timeliness of fund disbursement by the county government.

When it came to the county government's monitoring of funds disbursed, most of the teachers again leaned towards neutral sentiment, with a mean of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.79, signaling that there may be room for improvement in monitoring processes. The teachers strongly agreed that auditing was done after every ECDE project was completed, with a low mean of 2.02 and a standard deviation of 0.35. This reflects a distinguished confidence in the auditing practices within the ECDE projects.

The respondents' views were divided on the issue of parents paying user fees fully for smooth running of ECDE programs. This was evident from the mean score of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 1.1, suggesting varied opinions on the matter. The teachers expressed a neutral stance on the head teachers' planning on utilization of allocated funds, with a mean of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 0.79, indicating room for improvement in this area. Regarding transparency and accountability by the school administration on the use of ECDE funds, the instructors held a neutral to negative sentiment, with a mean of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 0.48, suggesting the need for enhanced transparency and accountability.

Finally, teachers showed a neutral to negative view on their remuneration as per the contract, with a high mean of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.43, indicating some dissatisfaction in this area. The overall mean was 2.996 implying a somewhat neutral sentiment among teachers about various aspects of budgetary allocation and its effects on the provision of pre-primary education. The small standard deviations show that responses failed to differ largely, implying a general consensus among the respondents.

The findings are in agreement with the report by unwomen.org (2021) that, an African developing country like Tunisia, the government gets grants and loans from World Bank as well as allocates 20% of her budget to the ministry of education to support education, with an emphasis on the pre-primary education of learners between 4 and 6 years. A similar study conducted by Johnson and Kumar (2023) echoed these findings. Consistently, the Johnson and Kumar (2023) revealed that the educators were unsure or negative about the timely disbursement of these funds. A contrasting study conducted by Smith and Lee (2022) in a more urban setting revealed that teachers felt the county government was not allocating sufficient funds for ECDE projects. Contrast to the findings of this study, the study indicated a positive sentiment among teachers regarding the timely disbursement of funds. Table 2 summarizes findings on budgetary allocation based on the opinions of parents.

Table 2: Parents' Opinions on Budgetary Allocation

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government allocates adequate funds for ECDE projects	2.26	0.92
The disbursement of funds is done on time by the county government	3.55	1.2
The county government monitors closely on utilization of funds disbursed.	4	0.7
Auditing is done after every ECDE project is completed.	3.79	0.74
Parents pay user-fees fully to enable smooth running of ECDE programs	1.45	0.5
The head teachers plan well on utilization of the allocated funds	2.53	1.25
There is transparency and accountability by the school management on the utilization of ECDE funds.	4.26	0.69
Teachers are well remunerated as per the contract.	2.13	0.66
Overall Mean	2.996	

Parents expressed strong agreement that they were fully paying user-fees to enable smooth running of ECDE programs, with a mean of 1.45 and a standard deviation of 0.5. It implied that parents were generally satisfied with their contribution to the ECDE programs. The opinion was positive regarding the teachers being well remunerated as per their contract. This statement had a mean of 2.13 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Thus, parents largely agreed that teachers were being paid fairly according to their contracts.

In terms of the county government's allocation of funds for ECDE projects, the mean was 2.26, with a standard deviation of 0.92. This showed a level of agreement among parents that the government was providing adequate funding. On the other hand, there was a higher level of disagreement regarding other aspects of fund management. The disbursement of funds on time by the county government had a mean of 3.55 with a standard deviation of 1.2. The higher mean indicated that parents were less satisfied with the timing of fund disbursement.

Additionally, the statement that the county government closely monitors the utilization of disbursed funds had a mean of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.7. This suggested strong disagreement among the parents about the government's monitoring efforts. Similarly, there was a high level of disagreement (mean of 4.26, standard deviation of 0.69) about transparency and accountability by the school management on the utilization of ECDE funds. This indicated that parents did not perceive the school management as being particularly transparent or accountable.

Auditing after every ECDE project was another area of concern. With a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.74, parents did not seem to be assured that audits were being done regularly and effectively. Regarding the planning for the utilization of the allocated funds by the head teachers, the statement had a mean of 2.53 and a standard deviation of 1.25, indicating mixed responses from the parents about the effectiveness of fund utilization plans. While there were areas of agreement such as parents' payment of user-fees and teachers' remuneration, there were significant concerns regarding the timely disbursement of funds, monitoring of funds, transparency, accountability, and auditing practices.

The findings concur with observations by Al-Hroub (2023) that parents have a vital role in the shaping of a youngster's educational experience, and their insights can be invaluable when determining budgetary allocations for educational institutions. According to Smith et al. (2019), involving parents in budgetary decisions can result in more targeted spending, ensuring funds are directed towards areas that will most positively impact students' learning and overall school experience. Moreover, the findings support the assertions Jones and Thompson (2020) that, parents prioritized expenditure on technological resources, extra-curricular activities, and teacher training above other areas. Therefore, incorporating the opinions of parents can provide a more holistic perspective, ensuring that educational budgets align with the actual needs and priorities of the student community. Table 3 summarizes findings on budgetary allocation based on the opinions of County officials.

Table 3: County Officials' Opinions on Budgetary Allocation

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government allocates adequate funds for ECDE projects	1.46	0.66
The disbursement of funds is done on time by the county government	2.77	0.6
The county government monitors closely on utilization of funds disbursed.	1.85	0.38
Auditing is done after every ECDE project is completed.	2	0.41
Parents pay user-fees fully to enable smooth running of ECDE programs	2.62	0.77
The headteachers plan well on utilization of the allocated funds	3.54	0.88
There is transparency and accountability by the school management on the utilization of ECDE funds.	2.92	1.04
Teachers are well remunerated as per the contract.	2.69	1.11
Overall Mean	2.481	

The results in Table 3 showed that according to the county officials, the county government was perceived to allocate adequate funds for ECDE projects, with a mean of 1.46 and a standard deviation of 0.66, indicating a strong level of agreement among the officials that sufficient funds were being allocated. In terms of fund disbursement, the mean was 2.77 with a standard deviation of 0.6. This suggested that officials generally agreed that funds were being disbursed on time by the county government.

Furthermore, the statement regarding close monitoring of funds disbursed had a mean of 1.85 and a standard deviation of 0.38. This indicated a high level of agreement among officials that the county government was closely monitoring the utilization of funds. The officials also expressed agreement that auditing was being conducted after every ECDE project, as shown by a mean of 2 and a standard deviation of 0.41. This suggested that officials perceived auditing practices to be in place and effective.

Regarding parents' payment of user-fees, the mean was 2.62 with a standard deviation of 0.77. This indicated that officials generally agreed that parents were fully paying user-fees to support the smooth running of ECDE programs. The statement about head teachers planning well for the utilization of allocated funds had a mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.88. This suggested that officials had a positive perception of the planning abilities of head teachers in utilizing funds effectively.

Moreover, there were concerns raised about transparency and accountability by the school management regarding the utilization of ECDE funds. The mean for this statement was 2.92, with a standard deviation of 1.04. That showed mixed opinions among officials, with some expressing agreement while others expressing disagreement. In terms of teachers' remuneration, the mean was 2.69 with a standard deviation of 1.11. That showed varying opinions among officials regarding whether teachers were being adequately compensated according to their contracts.

County officials generally agreed that the county government allocated adequate funds, disbursed funds on time, and monitored fund utilization closely. They also expressed confidence in the auditing process and parents' payment of user-fees. However, there were mixed opinions regarding transparency and accountability by the school management and the adequacy of teachers' remuneration.

According to Rodriguez and Anderson (2019), government officials often prioritize infrastructure and public safety due to the direct impact these have on the overall well-being and functionality of a community. In contrast, a study by Carter and Lewis (2020) highlights the emphasis government officials place on health and social services, especially in areas with a significant aging population or high rates of social disparities. Furthermore, Parker et al. (2020) observed that in areas experiencing rapid urbanization or population growth, officials are increasingly allocating budgets towards sustainable development and environmental conservation initiatives. Such allocation decisions underscore the importance of recognizing localized demands and shifting demographics in tailoring budgetary considerations.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation analysis was done to confirm the association between the independent variable and pre-primary education provision in Machakos County. The results for the correlation in the study showed that there was a strong positive and statistically significant association between budgetary allocation and provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. Increased budget allocation was associated with higher levels of provision of pre-primary education in Machakos County, Kenya. This implied that an investment in budget allocation could potentially lead to improved pre-primary education in Machakos County.

Regression results showed that budgetary allocation had a positive and significant effect on pre-primary education provision in Machakos County, Kenya. Specifically, a unit improvement in budgetary allocation was associated with an increase in the provision of education

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results showed that there were mixed sentiments among the respondents regarding the county government's handling of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) projects. Most of the participants were on the same opinion that the county government allocates sufficient funds for these projects (mean=1.81, SD=0.51) and were confident in post-project auditing practices (mean=2.02, SD=0.35). However, they expressed concerns about the timeliness of fund disbursement (mean=3.81, SD=0.40) and the monitoring of disbursed funds (mean=3.38, SD=0.79).

The respondents were ambivalent about the necessity of parents fully paying user fees for the smooth running of ECDE programs (mean=2.76, SD=1.10) and about the head teachers' planning for the utilization of allocated funds (mean=2.76, SD=0.79). They held a neutral to negative sentiment on transparency and accountability by school management on the use of ECDE funds (mean=3.67, SD=0.48) and on their remuneration as per the contract (mean=3.76, SD=0.43). Overall, respondents' views averaged out to be neutral (mean=2.996) with relatively low standard deviations, suggesting a consensus around these viewpoints.

Basing on the outcomes, it was concluded that the study on the pre-primary education provision in Mavoko Sub County, Machakos County was affected by budget allocation. This study concluded that, a robust budget allocation not only improves the quality of education but also ensures its accessibility, laying a strong foundation for pre-primary education.

The study recommended that in order to enhance the standards of ECDE Machakos County, policy makers should prioritize and increase the allocation of the budget to pre-primary education. Policy should focus on ensuring that adequate funds are provided for the construction, maintenance and upgrading of educational infrastructure, and for the procurement of quality teaching and learning materials.

Suggestions for Further Study

There is need for further study to establish other factors affecting provision of ECDE in Mavoko Sub County in Machakos County. This study only centered on one sub county in Machakos County, therefore, future study should consider examining the influence of parental education levels and socio-economic status on the provision of ECDE on whole of Machakos County. This could give additional insight into the level of parental involvement, their ability to support their children's educational needs, and their general perception on the usefulness of ECDE.

Moreover, given the crucial role teachers play on delivery of ECDE, a study could focus on the professional development experiences and needs of pre-primary teachers, not just in Machakos County but across different counties in Kenya. Further studies should be conducted to assess the availability, accessibility, and outcome of professional development programs on teachers' practices and students' outcomes. This could provide useful data for developing more effective training programs for teachers.

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